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THE

Catholic Pulpit.

THE

Catholic Pulpit,

CONTAINING A

Sermon for every Sunday and Holiday

IN THE YEAR,

And for Good Friday,

WITH

SEVERAL OCCASIONAL DISCOURSES.

Second American, from the last Revised London Edition.

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Introduction to the First American Edition.

In submitting this cheap edition of the Catholic Pulpit, in its present permanent form, to the Catholics of the United States, the publishers are happy to state that it has already, in the serial form, met with a most flattering reception on the part of the public, and many competent judges have bestowed upon it their decided approbation. In Great Britain the Catholic Pulpit has rendered the most efficient aid to Religion by conveying the truths of salvation to many a soul, that otherwise had never known "*the way, the truth and the life.*" In this country there are thousands who never, or rarely, get within sight or hearing of a Catholic pulpit. Many reside so remote from a church as seldom to enjoy the privilege of hearing a sermon;—again, the churches are often too small to accommodate the crowds that flock to them; and frequently the circumstances of the poor do not permit them to be present at the instructions of their Pastors.

It is confidently believed, that the circulation of this work will at least partially obviate these inconveniences, by transferring the Catholic pulpit from the Church to the very dwellings of the people. The piety, and also the learning and elegance of the Sermons which form this collection, will make it a handbook for the heads of families. In its pages, the rich and the poor will find both agreeable and salutary entertainment.

The community will be supplied in these pages with a series of readings suitable for Sundays and Festivals, which we trust may henceforward be found in the hands of those, who have been accustomed to waste much valuable time over profane books and worthless papers.

The publishers have added to the English Edition of this work several "occasional discourses," the productions of some of the most distinguished divines of Paris, London and Dublin.

Introduction to the First Edition.

The Sermons comprised in this volume made their first appearance in the shape of a Periodical, and, in that shape, met with a flattering reception. Without the help of one advertisement, unpraised, unbefriended, unmentioned by a single Review, Magazine, or Journal, The Catholic Pulpit has obtained the good wishes and the steady support of a number of readers sufficient to ensure its continuance as a Periodical, and to authorize the presentation of its first numbers to the public, in the more permanent form, which they here assume.

Some particulars regarding the authorship of these Sermons may be made known, on the completion of the first annual course. In the mean time, as no arts will be used to invite applause, so nothing will be said to deprecate censure. The critical reader will easily perceive that the discourses did not all emanate from the same pen: the inquisitive reader may perhaps long to see each attributed to its real author: but to the pious reader, who takes up the volume for the sake of the improvement and edification which may be derived from it, the absence of a name, hitherto possibly unknown to him, will be no loss; while the appearance of a name, however celebrated, however high in literature or dear to virtue, would in reality add nothing to the vigor of the reasoning, the beauty of the language, or the piety of the sentiments.

Of the writers, each can enter into the feelings and adopt the words, of St. Augustine: "Si quid in meis scriptis veri comprehenderis, existendo non est meum, at intelligendo et amando et tuum sit et meum: si quid autem falsi conviceris, errando fuerit meum, sed jam cavendo nec tuum sit nec meum."—*De Trinitate*, lib. 3.

Introduction to the Second London Edition.

The public, says one of the most elegant of our classics, *is too frequently mistaken as to the merit of candidates for its favor; but, to make amends, it is never mistaken long. A performance may be forced for a time into reputation; but, destitute of real merit, it soon sinks. Time, the touchstone of what is truly valuable, will soon discover the fraud; and an author should never arrogate to himself any share of success, till his works have been read, at least ten years, with satisfaction.*

The Catholic Pulpit has stood the test here prescribed; for during the ten years, which have now elapsed, since the first edition issued from the press, it has been continually receiving a peculiar and a most decisive species of approbation from those, who are the best qualified to judge of its utility. And, during no small portion of this period, the work, though out of print, has not been forgotten, and, though not to be obtained, has been frequently demanded. Owing to this continued demand, and to the Editor's removal from a very laborious mission, may be attributed this second edition of the original Catholic Pulpit.

The work has been carefully revised, and on the whole considerably condensed. Perhaps, still greater condensation might be an improvement. But, in retouching those sermons, which had been furnished by others, the Editor could not feel quite free from embarrassment. That very kindness and confidence, which entrusted him with unlimited power, would at times rather check, than embolden, him in exercising

"The last and greatest art, the art to blot."

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The First Sunday of Advent.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.—Luke xxi. 27.

As it is hard to do that well, which can be done but once, and as death is an event which can but once occur for each individual, yet at the same time is one on which our happiness or misery for eternity depends; it has been a frequent object with spiritual writers to teach men to die well. For this purpose, one of the best pieces of instruction which they offer, is frequently during health to anticipate the moment when we shall be summoned away, and to bring before the imagination the various scenes that will present themselves at our last hour: to mark the progress and approach of death, the wasting of the strength, the decay of the frame, the coming of the last sacraments, the agonizing pang: in fine, to descend into the silent tomb, to view the progress of the worm of corruption, the shapeless skeleton, the mouldering dust! To the Christian, judgment is as certain as death; like death, it can neither be tried nor practised beforehand; its consequences also are equally important to each individual, since on its result hangs an eternity of happiness, or an eternity of woe. To prepare ourselves, then, for this great assize should be the business of life; for which purpose it is highly proper, as in the former instance, to anticipate, by the help of imagination, the part which we shall most certainly have then to act; to represent to ourselves the bar, the Judge, the law, and the sentence; and to consider, attentively and in detail, the awful scene

which will then be opened upon us. This, fellow-christians, I propose this day to do. I will not delay in describing the fearful signs and prognostics that are to precede that day of terrors, nor the thrilling trumpet, which shall be heard to the utmost verge of the region of death, and arouse all from the first to the last of its countless inhabitants; but will commence where, being all for the last time assembled, they shall wait to hear their final doom: when, in the emphatic language of the Prophet Daniel, *the Judgment sat, and the books were opened.* In doing this, there is one reflection which I would have each of you perpetually to bear in mind;—that the event which you are now considering is one in which you yourselves must share; that the scene is such as those very eyes shall witness, with which you now behold the objects around you; the interrogatories, those to which the very tongue with which you now speak is to reply; in a word, that yourself and not another is to be the criminal at the bar. With this application of the subject, I will proceed to consider, in the first place, some of the circumstances which accompany the trial, and in the next, the nature of the trial itself.

To begin then with that, which in every assize (but particularly in this) forms the most conspicuous object, the person of the *Judge.* It is, my brethren, an Omniscient, Just, and Omnipotent God, charged with avenging the injuries which he has received at the hands of his own creatures.

An *Omniscient* God! A God, whose searching eye kens, at one view, the whole compass of creation; pierces the heavens and the earth, and penetrates the lowest caverns of the infernal abyss. A God, to whom there is neither past nor future; to whom the events of the most distant ages that have gone by, as well as of those that are to come, are all in actual occurrence; to whom, in the language of holy writ, a thousand years are as yesterday, and whose thoughts are from generation to generation; a God, who knows all the ways of men, who reads all the secrets of their hearts, who, by a single act of his all-piercing mind, beholds, distinctly and without confusion, all that has been thought, said, or done, by any of his creatures.

In an earthly court, the criminal often may indulge a hope, that, in the course of the proceedings, he may by artifice or

effrontery conceal, if not the whole, at least a part of his guilt; what he cannot deny, he may palliate or excuse; and to a mortal judge, innocence of intention may be, and often is, falsely adduced, to lessen the criminality of an action. Then, before this Judge of infinite knowledge, the possibility of concealment or deception will be altogether precluded: to him the most open action is not more clear than the most occult intention. His penetrating eye has all along beheld those secret springs of action which the sinner had thought to wrap in impenetrable obscurity. He has witnessed the first ambiguous leanings of his heart to temptation, has traced it through its subsequent, and almost imperceptible degrees of guilt, has marked the moment when complacency gave place to delectation, delectation to consent, consent to gratification. Every minute, every complicated circumstance of time, of place, of person, of means, of consequence, is opened and unravelled before him; nothing is forgotten, nothing altered, nothing disguised. *Their ways are always before him, they are not hidden from his eyes; and all their works are as the sun in his sight.*

It is a *Just* God! A God, not now sighing out the tender wailings of commiseration over an impenitent Jerusalem, nor shedding the last drop of his blood to redeem offending men; but a God bound by the laws of his own eternal justice to avenge upon the sinner the blood which he has shed for him in vain. At present we behold the wicked sharing, equally with the righteous, the goods of life; the attribute of justice seems to be forgot, and only that of mercy exercised. In that day, mercy shall give place to justice,—and what a justice, my brethren! Not a justice like that of man, which is often checked by compassion, which may be eluded by fraud, or prevented by force, which often cannot make a distinction between the innocent and the guilty, and which, to save the former, must be frequently contented to let the latter go unpunished; but a justice, which cannot be deprived of its ends, which will pursue the guilty with inflexible and uncompassionating rigor; a justice, which, with the nicest discrimination, will rectify all that apparent disorder with which we are now puzzled in the distribution of the gifts of heaven; a justice, which in the unerring scales of the sanctuary will weigh the talents that have been lent, with those that

have been returned; the time that has been given, with that which has been well employed; the graces and helps that have been imparted, with the virtues that have been acquired; the riches that have been bestowed, with the meritorious objects in which they have been spent; a justice, in fine, which will tear away the mask which here so often conceals man from others and from himself; which shall distinguish between genuine and counterfeit virtue, between the action and intention, between the action which is done for God and the action which is done for the world. *When I shall have taken a time, I will judge even justice itself, says the Lord.*

It is an *Omnipotent* God. To form some idea of what is meant by such an appellation, let us listen to the language of the inspired writers. *Alas! alas! alas!* cries out the prophet Jeremiah, *O Lord God, behold thou hast made heaven and earth by thy great power, and thy stretched out arm: no word shall be hard to thee. O most mighty, great, and powerful, the Lord of hosts is thy name, whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the children of Adam, to render unto every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his devices. The ways of the Lord,* says another of the inspired writers, *are in a tempest, and in a whirlwind, and clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up, and bringeth all the rivers to be a desert. Basan languisheth, and Carmel and the flower of Libanus fadeth away. The mountains tremble at him, and the hills are made desolate, and the earth hath quaked at his presence, and the world and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before the face of his indignation, and who shall resist, in the fierceness of his anger! His indignation is poured out like fire, and the rocks are melted by him. With a flood that passeth by, he will make an utter end, and darkness will pursue his enemies. The Almighty stood,* says Habacuc, *and measured the earth: he beheld and melted the nations, and the ancient mountains were crushed to pieces. The hills of the world were bowed down by the journeys of his eternity. The mountains saw, and were grieved. The great body of waters passed away. The deep put forth its voice, the deep lifted up its hands. The sun and the moon stood still in their habitations. In thy anger thou wilt tread the earth under foot, in thy wrath thou wilt astonish the*

nations. To such emphatic language, what shall I add? or how shall I heighten the awful impression which it is calculated to make, but by reminding you, that, on this day of wrath, all the might of this Omnipotent arm is to be exerted against the sinner, in executing the decree which infinite justice shall have pronounced? With God, to will and to perform are but the same act; and as before an all-wise Judge there is no deception, before an all-just Judge no appeal, so before an Omnipotent Judge there is no escape or resistance. Such then, fellow-christians, is the Being who is to preside at this last assize; such the Judge, before whom all who are here present, each one of you who hear, as well as I who speak, must on that day stand. Our friends and relations are, one after the other, quickly descending into the tomb, where they wait in silence the awful summons that is to call them to the final judgment. We, too, must soon join them. A moment has elapsed! The trumpet sounds, and the dread prediction is verified by the reality.—But let us proceed to examine the rest of the scene exhibited on this day of terrors.

In the next place, then, the *spectators*, the witnesses of the trial. It is, my brethren, the collective assemblage of all the rational creatures whom God hath made; the united myriads of heaven, earth, and hell. Of heaven—they are thus described by the Prophet Daniel. *I beheld till thrones were placed and the ancient of days sat. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before him; thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.* Of earth —they are all the children of Adam, without exception, from the first to the last, together with their progenitor. Of hell—Lucifer with all his associates. To confine our imagination, which is lost and bewildered at the contemplation of so vast a multitude, to the second of these, we there see collected the successive generations of all the nations which the sun illumines in his daily course; men of all times, of all ranks, of all ages, the master and the slave, the king and the subject, the antediluvian and the modern, all without badge, without title, bereft now of those vain marks and distinctions, which genius, birth, fortune, or accident, had heretofore thrown around them. Here the mighty conquerer of half the globe stands undistinguishable

from the last of his followers; here the proud genius, the renowned statesman, the resistless potentate, stands among the immense multitude, unsought, unrespected, unattended. The stroke of death has in all, ere this, broke the spell which gave to the petty affairs and agitations of time any importance. Every power, every feeling of their mind, is occupied and absorbed in the proceedings of the awful bar before which they stand, in listening to the dread awards that are then being pronounced, every reiteration of which seals the doom of eternity. In the sight of this immense multitude, then, my brethren, each one of us must one day stand. Before its all attentive gaze, the secrets of each heart, of each conscience, will be laid open; in the very presence of those, in whose acquaintance and familiarity we now live, shall the humiliating scrutiny be made. They shall all behold us, not as now, when the actions that externally appear are the only means to form a judgment of the man; but such as we really are. The thick veil, with which our pride and self-love had in life so studiously sought to conceal the dark side of our character from the eyes of others, and often from our own, shall then be torn away. The dark suspicion, which we had never trusted beyond the confines of our own breast, shall then be made known, even to the very person who was the object of it. The secret envy, the concealed aversion, the detractive whisper, which perhaps was indulged under the external show of friendship and cordiality, shall be then revealed to the eye of day. Then too shall be laid open all those secret springs of action, the guilty passions by which we were impelled, but which we were unwilling to acknowledge; that avarice, which had closed the hand of charity, and which we had lightly termed prudence and economy; that lust, which had been fostered and indulged under the soft appellative of friendship and affection; that vanity, which had been cherished under the name of propriety and decorum.—Ah! my brethren, if now it costs you so much to lay open the secrets of your soul to the single minister of God, if now you cannot approach the sacred tribunal without being covered with shame and confusion, what, think you, will be your feelings when all your secret delinquencies shall be exposed to the eyes of the universe, when every hidden thought,

every illicit emotion, to which your heart has at any time consented, shall be presented to public view?

The next circumstance, which merits our consideration in this terrible assize, is the *law* by which we are to be tried. To the law, in every just court, when the evidence against the accused has been clearly established, must the final appeal be made; by it must the guilt or innocence of the party be ascertained, his acquittal or condemnation, as well as the measure of his punishment, be determined. Hence, before human tribunals, a principal object of the counsel for the accused is to prevent the law from taking effect; to embarrass its application, to explain away its meaning, to prove it unknown, unjust, impracticable, or obsolete. This we often behold effected, and in an earthly court the criminal not unfrequently escapes the hand of justice, because the provisions of the law are inadequate, its meaning obscure, its expediency dubious. Nothing of all this, my brethren, can possibly occur with relation to that divine law by which we are to be tried on that awful day. It is the law of God himself; it was inscribed by the same hand, which is now ready to punish its non-observance. Here no chicanery, no interpretation, no privilege, no prescription. It is a law perpetually holy, perpetually just, perpetually binding. A law equally established for the rich and for the poor, for the mighty and for the weak, for the learned and for the ignorant. A law, the provisions of which comprise all times, all persons, all circumstances, all events. From its authority we cannot plead exemption; in baptism we have subscribed to its regulations, we have engaged to observe it, to conform our lives to its maxims, and to abide by its decisions. Of its prohibitions and ordinances we cannot plead ignorance; ignorance in an affair which we knew to be of such vital importance, and with the means of instruction before us, can only serve to blacken our guilt.—Its practicability we cannot call in question. He who imposed it has said: *The commandment, that I command thee this day, is not above thee, nor far off from thee. Nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say, which of us can go up to heaven to bring it to us, and we may hear and fulfil it in work. Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayest excuse thyself, and say, Which of us can cross the sea and bring it to us, that we may*

hear and do that which is commanded; but the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. During this life, indeed, the tepid and negligent Christian thinks to palliate and justify his disregard of the law of God by a thousand vain allegations and pretexts; its sacred prohibitions are made light of, sometimes despised and ridiculed; at that day not a single syllable of the sacred code shall be suffered to become void. The Judge himself hath already warned us in the most solemn manner, *I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law, till all be fulfilled.* Then shall all the false and flattering interpretations of the precepts of the gospel, that feigned inability, those pretended exemptions, by which the sinner had, during life, succeeded in quieting the alarms of his conscience, be exposed and dissipated. Then shall thousands of devout and fervent observers of the law, of all ages, sexes, and conditions, rise up and condemn the vain excuses of the tepid and indolent Christian. You, shall the martyrs exclaim, for fear of compromising your worldly interest, or drawing upon yourselves the ridicule or frowns of men, have not hesitated to break through the sacred injunctions of the law of God; while we, rather than infringe the same law, have despised the most cruel racks and torments of persecutors, have met and smiled at death in its most frightful shapes. You, shall the holy confessors cry out, have silently heard the law of God insulted, outraged, blasphemed, when perhaps a single word would have checked the impiety; while we, from the gloom of our prisons and the wilds of our exile, have not ceased to proclaim the sanctity of the law, for which we suffered. You, shall the holy solitaries exclaim, have shuddered at the least act of penance and mortification, though proved to be absolutely necessary to overcome the violence of those passions, which without it you had found to be invincible; while we, buried in hideous deserts, long after we had subdued the flesh and its concupiscences, imposed fresh austerities on our emaciated frames. The law, for which we underwent so much, was the same for us as it was for you. We were made of flesh and blood like you; had feelings as acute as yours; were as sensible to the stigma of folly and weakness which the world set upon our actions. Ah, sinners!

were it necessary to go beyond yourselves, to find the condemnation of all your excuses; did not the efforts and exertions which you daily make in the service of the world, give the lie to all that you allege in defence of your omissions in the service of God, how weighty, how unanswerable, would be the depositions of such testimonies against you!

To come now to the last circumstance in this momentous trial, which, exclusive of every other, will be alone sufficient to impart the most intense interest to all and each of the proceedings in it, I mean the pronouncing of the *sentence*. What this is to be, the mouth of truth itself has briefly informed us. *Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you:* or, *Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* To hear one of these two sentences must be the lot of every individual of the human race, it must be the lot of every one here present. Continuing, then, to bring the application home, let us consider ourselves as standing before the awful throne, and waiting to hear pronounced our irreversible destiny. But, my brethren, how shall you anticipate, how shall I describe your feelings at that terrible moment? Erroneous indeed would be the conception which I should convey to you, were I to compare them to any which it is possible for you to experience during life. Even when you are told, that the moment which you are contemplating is one by which heaven or hell, an eternity of happiness or an eternity of misery is to be unalterably fixed, the idea which you form is far from being adequate. Common as are the terms, the import of them is unfathomable to mortal understanding. In our present state, we have not known, we cannot know, what it is to lose heaven: what it is to be condemned to hell. The temporal images, from which we borrow our conceptions, can at best but give us a very imperfect notion of the joys of the one, or of the sufferings of the other. The powers of the human mind are inadequate to measure the vast series of the eternal years; and, when put to their utmost stretch, inadvertently fall back into the computations of time. Far different our situation, when we shall be expecting to hear that last award. Then, endowed with quite other powers of perception, we shall fully see what is lost by losing heaven, what is incurred by being condemned to hell.

Then shall we know the import of that most awful of words, ETERNITY!——Then shall we read and decipher the most hidden secrets of the bottomless abyss; see all its horrors, hear its groans, its weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

Such then being our situation at that moment, do I say too much in asserting, that nothing on earth can give us an idea of the sentiments which we shall then have? Ah, Christians! if before a human tribunal, we often see the fortitude of the most hardened fail, at the moment which intervenes between the trial and the verdict; if the announcement of the decision is expected with breathless anxiety, not only by the criminal himself, but often by those who have been but hearers and spectators of the trial; what shall we say of our feelings, when all that is great in heaven, and all that is terrible in hell shall conspire to arouse our sensibilities? But the destiny is pronounced! The instant that reveals it beholds its fulfilment. Time has passed; eternity, that ever-commencing, never-passing moment, involves us in its interminable maze.

Thus have we seen some of the chief circumstances which contribute to give the highest degree of interest and importance to this day of terrors. It only remains, that, while they are still fresh to our imagination, we seclude ourselves from the rest of men, and individually examine how far our own consciences will bear the scrutiny of such a Judge, the regards of such an assembly, the test of such a law, and how far we may presume on hearing a favorable sentence. Suppose, then, the moment of death has arrived, which summons us to the presence of the Judge. We stand alone before him. The last scene, which you had beheld before your eyes were closed in the sleep of death, was that of your friends and relations crowding around your couch, and affording you support and consolation; and of the minister of religion, who pressed to your lips the image of your Redeemer, and soothed and allayed your but too just apprehensions. Alas! where are they now! They have disappeared; they come not now to offer you support and consolation. No advocate now, intercessor none. They have disappeared, and with them have disappeared all that flattered, pleased, and deluded you. You stand alone before him! Instantly a sunbeam darts its ray into your bosom, and brings to the light of day all

those treasures of iniquity which had been collecting there during a long life of tepidity and indulgence.

Then shall all the long-forgotten scenes of your early youth, those scenes in which propriety was the last consideration, be once again brought into view. Actions, which to the jaundiced eye of self-love, had appeared pardonable and innocent, shall now, to your utter dismay, stand forth clothed in the deformity of vice. Those accumulated sins in relation to the service of God, which day after day were committed and forgotten, those irreverences in the holy place, those omissions of essential duties, those confessions without change or repentance, those communions without fruit or devotion, those sins of sloth, of tepidity, of human respect, which had never been repented of, because never examined or confessed, shall now rise up against you. Then, too, in relation to your neighbor, shall you be overwhelmed to hear his soul demanded at your hands. As if the burthen of your own enormities were insufficient, to you shall be imputed whatever of guilt your pernicious example, your authority, your influence, your words, or your actions, may have occasioned in those around you. Then shall the cry of the poor and the houseless, of the widow and the orphan, against whose petitions you had, during life, closed your ear, be heard to your condemnation; then shall you be examined as to the application of that superabundant wealth which you had flattered yourself to believe lying at your own disposal, but which the Church of God, by her sacred oracles, and by the mouths of her ministers, had all along declared to be the patrimony of the poor. Then shall the busy whisper of detraction, which perhaps inflicted a mortal wound on the reputation of your neighbor, be urged against you, not as you had apprehended or pronounced it, but pointed and envenomed as it was by all the tongues which had repeated it after you.

In relation to yourself, how will you shudder at the spectacle, now for the first time exhibited to you by your own heart; that pride, which you had so long fostered and soothed; that vanity, which had stamped criminality on the very actions which you had considered as the redeeming portions of your conduct; those illicit thoughts and desires, which you had so frequently indulged and so studiously concealed; that envy, which had

pined, where charity should have rejoiced; that jealousy, which had concealed itself under the fairest garb; that ingratitude, in fine, which, day after day, had loaded God your benefactor with new indignities, and added a fresh degree of criminality to every similar offence. Next to the examination of the evil which you have done, shall follow that of the good which you have omitted. Here shall you behold registered against you the imprecations of those, whom, by a word of timely admonition, you might have saved from eternal woe; the curses perhaps of a fond child, in whom, through a mistaken love, you had neglected to check those early passions which ultimately hurried him to perdition. Here shall be recalled to you all the opportunities of promoting the honor and glory of God, the cause of truth and religion, and your own salvation, which you have neglected; the time which you have lost, the talents which you have buried. Not only your omissions themselves, but also the causes of them, whether they proceeded from ignorance, frailty, or malice, all shall be nicely sifted and examined. Finally shall commence the inquiry into the gifts and graces which you have received: and here, fellow-christians, it is, that this last examination shall become doubly terrible. Here shall the just and infallible Judge himself enter into judgment with you.

Enumerating in succession all that he had done for your salvation, he shall demand what return you have made for each of the graces and succors with which you have been visited. Here shall he point out to you the grace of adoption which you received in baptism, when, snatched from the jaws of hell, you promised eternal allegiance to your deliverer. Here shall he show you the grace of reconciliation, which, after repeated prevarications, he has never ceased to impart in the sacrament of penance. Here shall he recall all the interior motions of grace with which he has inspired you; all the external helps and admonitions which you have received; the example of his saints, which was given for your encouragement; the promises and threats which he has held out by his sacred oracles; the reproaches of conscience by which he has so often sought to rouse you from the lethargy in which you were engaged: of all shall he demand the strictest return, the most rigorous account.

To sum up the measure of your guilt,—to cover, and totally

to overwhelm you with confusion, he shall re-demand his own blood at your hands. He shall show you the prints of his wounds. He shall require from you the soul which he purchased on the cross, which he redeemed and made his own by suffering in its stead.

Ah, Christians! but too fully will then be verified that prediction of our divine Redeemer, that on that day the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon shall rise up in judgment against those of the favored Jerusalem. A thousand and a thousand times will you envy the lot of him on whom the sun of justice had never shed its illuminating ray. He indeed, for neglecting to obey the voice of reason, cannot escape condemnation; you, to the guilt of rejecting the same voice, have added that of contemning the loud and repeated calls of heaven; you have abused the gifts and succors with which you were enriched, and consummated your impiety by trampling under foot the blood of your Redeemer.

My dear friends, awful as is the scene which I have been describing, it is not an ideal one; the points on which the examination turns, are not difficult and obscure questions of morality or doctrine; they are not such as can only regard a small portion of mankind; they are nothing but the common duties of life, the common gifts of grace, in which every true believer shares. From answering then to these interrogations, no one in reason can hope to be exempted. They come home to every breast, and the very nature of infinite justice requires that the pride displayed in the sinner's rebellion should be equalled by the confusion endured in his condemnation.

The next question is, how far we, individually speaking, are prepared to meet this searching investigation. To this question, not I, but your own consciences, your past, your present life, must make the important answer.

One reflection, however, there is, which I wish to make before I quit this awful subject. It is, that, judging by experience and the ordinary rules of Providence, the sentence that would now be past upon you, were you this instant to be summoned to the bar of divine justice, is the same as will then be uttered. Does this assertion excite your surprise? But the small number of those, who, in the midst of a life of tepidity and sin, are

sincerely converted, fully testifies its truth. I deny not indeed that it is a rule to which exceptions may be found; but they are rare.

If, therefore, upon a review of life, you find reason to tremble for the result of a trial that should at this moment be commenced, think not, that you will alter your destiny by a few vain and transient desires of conversion; by restraining yourself from the grosser and more flagrant excesses, while you continue enslaved to the same indifference and tepidity in the service of God, while the same coldness of charity towards your neighbour chills your heart, while the same abuse of divine grace, and the same love of the world, which at present would render your case hopeless, continue in your soul. No! The very fact that your past life has been a life of guilt, renders it more than dubious, that without the greatest sacrifices and the greatest exertions, you will never be converted. If you fear judgment, fear that by which alone judgment is terrible. Frequently approach in imagination to the dread tribunal. Weigh and examine your actions by its decisions. There will you be undeceived as to all the vain and false judgments of men; there will you learn duly to appreciate in time, that which alone can render you happy in eternity.

Sermon XX.

The Second Sunday of Advent.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SALVATION.

What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?—MATT. xvi. 26.

THAT our present life is short and uncertain,—that we are on all sides exposed to accidents, any one of which may, in a moment, separate us from all that we love and possess upon earth,—that, should we even escape all the perils of life, old age will, in the compass of a few years, infallibly dissolve this our earthly frame,—are familiar truths. If, in the fascination of earthly pleasures and pursuits, we would willingly forget them, vain are our efforts. Death, with his hateful train, incessantly stalks before us, meets us in the midst of business and diversion, and uncourteously reminds us, in accents not to be mistaken, that the shaft which so often smites those around us, cannot but soon descend upon ourselves. What the design of Providence is, in thus frequently placing before us mementos of our mortality, it is impossible to mistake. It is, my brethren, to counteract the charm by which the objects of time delude and enchant us; it is to convince us that that which we must so soon leave, is unworthy of our solicitude; it is to induce us to direct all our attention to securing that which is beyond the reach of death. Unfortunately, however, to the greater part of mankind, these admonitions are sent in vain. From whatever cause it proceeds, certain it is, that the greater part of mankind come to the borders of eternity utterly destitute of that provision which it was the sole business of their lives to make. Earth and its toys have incessantly amused them, and while for the acquisitions that

have passed away no efforts have been wanting, for those possessions which alone are permanent none have been exerted. To prevent so fatal an error in your conduct, my brethren, is the end which I propose, in calling your attention to that most important of all affairs—your own salvation. The subject is not one of merely partial interest; it is one of vital, of personal, of individual importance. No one is here present, whom it does not immediately concern; no one who will not, in the course of a few years, either lament his indifference, or rejoice in his attention to this transcendent affair.

Salvation, fellow-christians, is the only end for which you were made, the great affair for which you came into this world. This truth is one of the first which religion presented to your consideration, when, after informing you that you were made by God, she declared that the end of his creating you was that you might know him, love him, and serve him in this life, and be happy with him for ever in the next. From this first truth, obvious and simple as it may appear, the most important practical inferences may be drawn; on it the whole of morality may be said to rest; and it is in its consequences, a condemnation of the conduct of the immense majority of mankind. For, if salvation be the only end of your existence, it follows, that all the gifts which you possess, whether of grace or nature, of mind or body, are serviceable to you only inasmuch as they tend to promote this great affair; it follows, that except in relation to this great business, all the wisdom of the learned, all the power of the strong, all the riches of the wealthy, in a word, whatever excites the fears, the hopes, the solicitude, the envy, the passions of men, are, in the eyes of God and in reality, what the wise man has termed them: *Vanity of vanities, and all vanity.* If to be saved is the end of your existence, it follows, that the science of salvation is of all sciences the most necessary; and that none can be so nobly and so wisely occupied, as he whose every action and intention is directed to this great affair. It follows, that from attending incessantly to the same important object, no occupation, no situation, no difficulties, can exempt you: that it is an affair, which, from the commencement of reason to your latest breath, ought to supersede, in your esteem, all other objects: that, in com-

parison with this, all your gains, all your losses, friends, fortune, family, reputation, life itself, are of minor importance.

Such, my brethren, are the obvious consequences of that simple truth which religion so early impressed upon you. But oh! how utterly repugnant are these consequences to the language and maxims of the world at large! In the world, the man who applies himself with earnestness to the great affair of his salvation, is beheld with a feeling of pity and contempt. The finger of ridicule is pointed at him, and his conduct is stigmatized, as the effect of a weak, or of a gloomy mind. Thus is this first of sciences undervalued in the world; thus is this noblest and best of human occupations, that which is the least regarded and pursued. As the world becomes more corrupt, as depravity and impiety gain the ascendant, the example of a person truly alive to the importance of salvation is of more rare occurrence. And whence is this? The world itself is composed of men, whose individual vital interest demands that they should give their first attention to their salvation. Their own good is at stake. In the affairs of time, we find them all activity, vigilance, penetration. Keen, calculating and discerning, whenever there is a question of temporal advantage; it is only in the great affair of salvation that they are languid, uninterested, and insensible. While, for the acquisition of wealth, of pleasure, or of knowledge, no labor, no cost, no time is spared; to attain salvation, the least sacrifice is deemed too great, the least labor too oppressive. Whence then this infatuation? My brethren, the wise man informs us, when he declares that *the bewitching of vanity obscureth good things;* the Prophet Jeremiah informs us, when he says, *With desolation is all the world made desolate, because there is none that thinketh in the heart.* Were our thoughts seriously, though but occasionally, bent on the great affair of our salvation, we could not be so indifferent, so supine, so neglectful of this transcendentally important business.

For what is it, my brethren, you neglect, when you neglect your salvation? Ah! it is an affair, not of time, but of eternity. The question is, not whether you are to be rich or poor, whether in sickness or in health, whether in disgrace or in honor, during ten, twenty, or thirty years of your mortal existence: it is, whether you are to be a citizen of heaven, or a tenant of

hell; it is, whether you are to be a friend of God, or an object of his indignation; whether you are to be happy for eternity, or tormented for ever. The question is not about mere contingencies or possibilities; it is about an alternative, one side of which must inevitably come to pass. It must be heaven or hell, for eternity. You yourselves, each one of us here present, will in his turn hear pronounced upon himself the irrevocable decision. Not a day dawns upon you, not a night invests you in its shades, but the fatal doom may be for ever sealed.—The loss of salvation, is a loss which nothing can repair. Here on earth, there is no calamity, however great, no evil, however extensive, but may admit of some alleviation. A failure in the great affair of salvation, at once precludes all hope, closes every prospect, but that of eternal wo. To myriads of the human race, the sad catastrophe has already happened; to myriads the gloomy night of a miserable eternity has already begun. Only a few years have elapsed since they were deemed happy in the enjoyment of honors, beauty, riches, pleasure. The world, perhaps, still resounds with their name, and their example is still admired, applauded, and followed.

Approach now any one of these sufferers, call up and adjure from his darksome prison any one of those, who, while they neglected the affair of their salvation, drew upon themselves, by their talents, their wealth, their success, the envy and admiration of mankind. Approach and ask them, what are now their sentiments with regard to salvation. They are counsellors not likely to deceive. Bitter experience has, too late, made them wise. Flattery now soothes not their ear, nor will human censures warp their testimony. Their unanimous answer, my dear friends, has been given us in the book of Wisdom: *We have erred*, do they say, *from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction, and have walked through hard ways, but the way of the Lord we have not known. What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves, whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot*

be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters. Or as, when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known. So we, also being born, forthwith ceased to be, and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness.— For the hope of the wicked, continues the inspired writer, *is as dust which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm, and as smoke that is scattered abroad by the wind, and as the remembrance of a guest of one day that passed by.* From the depositions of such evidence, let us now turn to those of the dead, who, during life, have made the great affair of their salvation their chief object. *These are they,* whom the children of this world *have held in scorn and derision, and for a parable of reproach, esteeming their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold, now they are numbered among the sons of God, and their lot is among the saints.* Are the little sacrifices, do you think, which they made in life, their past labors in the cause of God, the mortifications and penances by which they overcame the world, the flesh, and the devil; are these to them now objects of sorrow and repentance? Ah! could their happy souls be susceptible of grief, the only subject of affliction to them would be, that a single moment of their lives should have been given to the world; that salvation should have ever failed to engross their undivided attention. Christians! while in the management of temporal affairs, it is by the experience of others, by the failure or success of those who have preceded you, that you regulate your own conduct, shall it be only in the great affair of salvation that the language of experience shall be heard in vain?

But, if this voice of the dead, this adjuration of the grave, be insufficient to arouse you to a feeling sense of the importance of salvation, listen, while I declare in what estimation the same is regarded by the God who created, who redeemed you, by the God of omniscience and of truth. From eternity your salvation has occupied a place in his divine mind. With a view to this, he gave you existence. In subordination to this, did he create the universe itself, with all its magnificent array. Great as he is, insignificant as is man, your salvation is not beneath his most tender solicitude. The utmost effort of omnipotence

itself has been exerted to promote it. Yes! for us men and for our salvation it was, that the King of heaven descended from heaven. For your salvation did the Son of God become man; for your salvation did he endure pain and poverty, hardships and contempt. For your salvation did he offer up all the actions of his life. Your salvation it was which drew from him a flood of tears and a sweat of blood; this it was which bound him to the pillar, which crowned him with thorns. For this did he bear the heavy cross upon his mangled shoulders; for this did he give his hands and his feet to be pierced; for this did he undergo the torments of death. Ah, Christians! a God suffering, weeping, bleeding for man's salvation; man thoughtless, careless, insensible with regard to his own salvation—which is the greater subject of astonishment? But what shall we conclude from this striking contrast, on the subject of salvation, between the sentiments of God and man? What, but that God should demand back at the hands of his creature, all that he has done and suffered for him in vain? What, but that God, whose secret judgments are the most terrible, should suffer the negligent Christian to proceed on in the way, in which, in spite of so many admonitions, so many and so powerful helps, he has chosen to walk; that he should suffer him to continue in his torpor, till final impenitence puts the consummation to his guilt, and an unhappy death closes a life of tepidity.

Such, my brethren, is the inevitable consequence of a life spent in forgetfulness of the great affair of salvation; such the judgment which is daily exemplified upon numbers of those who fall around us. Such also, let us not deceive ourselves, will soon be the judgment exemplified upon us, if the great affair of our salvation fail to engage our earnest attention and solicitude. And should this unfortunately be the case, oh! who shall describe the tortures of your soul, when, fluttering on the confines of eternity, you shall behold on either side nothing but dismay. Before you a just God, demanding an account of all your years, a return for all his labors, his sufferings, and his blood; behind you a world which you have so long idolized and loved, now for ever fleeing from you, deserting you in your greatest necessity. Gone all opportunities of gaining eternity, gone your past pleasures, all of them like a dream, like a point in the retro-

spect. No time for amendment, no hope, no consolation left. Oh, then it is that the importance of salvation will at last be adequately felt. Then it is that you will be fully sensible of the truths of eternity. Then it is that you will be fully sensible of the folly and nothingness of all earthly pleasures and pursuits.

These, my brethren, are common and simple reflections. They are truths which it requires no deep research, no strength of reasoning, to clear up and elucidate. They are reflections which you have heard again and again repeated; which we are continually pressing on your attention. On their importance, on the awful consequences which they involve, you are all agreed. No one will refuse to acknowledge that it is folly to prefer earth to heaven, time to eternity. Yet, with all this knowledge, with all this conviction, we still see men blindly rushing to perdition, in the practical desertion of the principles which they profess. And whence is this? It is, as I have already had occasion to remark, because they know these truths as if they knew them not. It is because they never suffer them to make due impression. Rouse, then, from that fatal slumber in which you have hitherto been immerged. Act the part of rational, of consistent beings. If you believe yourselves created for another and a better world, if you deem salvation worth your ambition, let your first attention be directed to its attainment; let it never be absent from your thoughts, let it enter into all your calculations; let salvation be the term, the goal, to which all your steps, all your views are directed; let it be the criterion by which all your actions are tried and regulated. Before every undertaking, first ask yourself the important question, *Is this compatible with, is this conducive to my salvation?* When the world smiles upon you, when it invites you to share in its frivolities and its pleasures, say to it, *I have on hand the great affair of salvation.* Under the assaults of avarice, when riches or any of the goods of life offer to captivate your heart, ask yourself the question, *Will the possession of these compensate for the loss of my salvation?* When the flesh assails you, when rebellious passions would hurry you to criminal gratifications, check their importunities by remembering that the pleasures which they promise are momentary; the salvation which they endanger, eternal. In the morning, think that a new day is given you for no other end

but to labor in it for your salvation. At night, rigorously examine your progress during the day. Diligently weigh and balance your gains and losses in this great concern. In a word, in all that you plan, in all that you undertake, in all that you say, think, or do, let your life be regulated by that truth of truths, *nothing will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul.* And that, after working out your salvation in the present life, you may possess the fruit of your labors in the life to come, is a blessing, &c.

Sermon XXX.

The Third Sunday of Advent.

WHO ART THOU?

Who art thou?—John i. 19.

To the greater part of mankind, few questions could perhaps be proposed, which they would find it more difficult to answer, than that contained in these three simple words—*Who art thou?* The reply to them, as given by the great precursor of the Messiah, one who, being under the immediate influence of inspiration could not be mistaken in the correctness of his views, is too contrary to the notions which men in general entertain in their own regard, to allow us for a moment to suppose that their depositions on the proposed subject would be conformable to truth. They have not studied, and, consequently, know not themselves. Among them vast multitudes there are, who, with indefatigable industry, carry their inquiries into every other department of knowledge, studiously treasure up the maxims of others, and spare neither labor, time nor cost, to make themselves acquainted with all that is recondite and curious in art and science. Look we for those whose attention is occupied with the question in the text, that is to say, in acquiring a proper view and knowledge of themselves? The instances we shall meet with will be rare and singular. And yet this is a science, with which, in point of importance and utility, none of those that mankind so incessantly toil to attain can bear any comparison,—a science, with which their best interests are inseparably connected, and which, if properly pursued, will be to them a sure path to temporal and eternal happiness. But, as if to

neglect this necessary science were too slight an evil, most men even avoid every subject that might supply them with information; fear no inquiry so much as that which might conduct them to themselves; and studiously seek, in a multitude of foreign pursuits, to forget who and what they are. Unfortunately, they often succeed, pass through life in utter ignorance of that which it was so important for them to be informed of, until, at its close, the fearful question, *Who art thou?* is not only put, but answered for them, at God's tribunal, and this in such a manner, as both to preclude them from deriving any advantage from the disclosure which is then made, and to render the same the sad, but sure introduction to eternal wo. To avert from ourselves this last and worst of calamities, let us, fellow-christians, whilst it can avail us, for once, fairly and individually, put to ourselves the great question—*Who art thou?* To aid you in the reply, is all that I propose, during the short space of time in which I am about to address you.

The two great relations of man, are that of time and that of eternity—that of nature and that of grace; and, to come at a proper knowledge of what he is, it will be necessary to consider him under these two points of view. In the first place, then, in the order of nature and of time, *who art thou?* Here let the vain lovers of distinction and applause, the admirers of pomp, the pursuers of pleasure, the slaves of interest, the votaries of riches,—those, too, who, on occasion of contradictions or contempt, feel within their hearts the busy workings of pride, who in the secret comparison which they make between others and themselves, are used to pronounce in their own favor,—in a word, let all and each one, who, in its full extent, have not yet learned the lesson of Christian humility, severally put to themselves the same interrogatory—*Who art thou?*

The answer, fellow-christians, from all, without exception, must be:—A descendant of Adam—a sojourner on earth, an inheritor of death. A few years ago, and thou wast not! In the multitude of generations that have passed away, thy achievements, thy talents, thy very name, were utterly unknown. The busy world, occupied, as now, with its pastimes, its pursuits, and its follies, thought as little of thee, as thou now thinkest of those who are not yet in being.

For six thousand successive years, the joyous sun rose cheerful in the morning, appeared bright in the meridian, and set glorious in the west, and thou wast neither warmed by its influence nor enlightened by its ray. The place which thou now holdest was tenanted by strangers; the spots, now so familiar to thee, were trodden by other feet; and thy very dwelling perhaps witnessed the gay circle, the festive board, and thou wast not missed, nor thy presence needed, nor thy absence regretted. In the meantime, the material particles which enter into the composition of thy corporeal frame, of which thou art so careful, or of which, perchance, thou hast even the folly to be vain, were scattered wide; some borne on high by the winds of heaven, others resting motionless in the kindred soil; some indeed forming part of the beauteous productions of nature, while others were united in degrading alliance with all that is most offensive and vile.

As to thy superior and better part, thy immortal soul, we find it, during this long succession of years, in a still lower, and, if possible, more humiliating condition. Placed, as it would seem, in the obscure world of future possibilities, and known only to Him in whose eye both light and darkness are alike, it there awaited, in utter unconsciousness, the almighty mandate by virtue of which it was to animate and rule its material partner. At length, after nine months' close captivity in the womb, without any concurrence or knowledge of thine own, thou wast ushered into day; and, in the shape of a weeping, helpless infant, didst unconsciously take thy place among those that are born of woman. Thou art born, and swathing-bands are softly put round thy slender frame, and all the care of maternal tenderness is required, lest the feebly glimmering taper of life, so lately lighted, should expire. Such, my brethren, is the origin of all men; such the humiliating acknowledgment which every individual makes by implication, who ranks himself among the descendants of Adam. Such, in a word, are the outlines, which mark alike the commencing history of the rich and of the poor, of the learned and of the ignorant, of the monarch and of the subject. In after-life, a thousand peculiarities will diversify the drama; its introductory scene is everywhere the same. *Naked*, says holy Job, *came I from my mother's womb, and naked must I return.*

But let us proceed with the history of the child, now that he has become a sojourner on earth. We have left him little, helpless, ignorant, unambitious; we shall soon behold him swelling with pride, indignant at the least rebuke or contradiction, triumphing in his strength, his riches, his talents, his appearance, or any other adventitious qualification, to which he may happen to attach the idea of excellence. To undeceive him in all this, and to show him what he really is, let us now put to him, or rather to ourselves, in our relation to present time and things, the great question of the text,—Sojourner on earth, *who art thou?* A frail creature, a puny insect, an insignificant worm, a very atom in creation. The world in which thou livest is itself but a point in the universe; yet, little as it is, thou canst not fill it with thy name or thy actions. To multitudes of its inhabitants, all puny and insignificant like thyself, the knowledge of thy person, thy acquirements, thy exploits, thy name, will never reach. The mighty European, with all his power, and learning, and skill, is a being scarcely known to myriads inhabiting vast tracts and regions of the earth. He is born, and they rejoice not; he dies, and they are not sad. His mighty projects, his wars, his heroic achievements, affect them as little as the deeds of past ages, recorded in history, affect ourselves. Even within the circle of our own little horizon, among the few who may see and become acquainted with us or our actions, how many will condemn, how many ridicule or despise us? And should all be occupied in admiring and praising us, can this be a matter of exultation, or at all raise us from our native littleness? As well might the microscopic insect pride itself on its gigantic form, because its dimensions appear great to the eye of the beholder.

But if man be thus little and insignificant in his relations to the universe around him, does he not possess within himself intrinsic advantages, that may indemnify him for his want of importance, and which may render him peaceful and happy, if he is not to be great? Alas! nothing can be more sad and humiliating, than the picture which the sacred writer has given us of human miseries. *Great labor is created for all men, and a heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam, from the day of their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their*

burial in the mother of all. Their thoughts and fears of the heart, their imagination of things to come, and the day of their end. From him that sitteth on a glorious throne, unto him that is humbled in earth and ashes; from him that weareth purple and beareth the crown, even to him that is covered with rough linen: wrath, envy, trouble, unquietness, and the fear of death, continual anger and strife. But, see the gay votaress of pleasure, decked out according to all the fantastic rules of female vanity,—she who is the admiration of every circle, the gaze of every assembly,—is she too to be classed among the lowly and wretched sojourners on earth? If, indeed, the rich plumes, the brilliant gems, the varied silks, that cover her person, were natural to her, all that could then be said would be, that she might look upon herself as equal, in external appearance, to the flower that springs unconscious in the field, or to the bird that flies from tree to tree in the forest. But, as it is, even this poor competition is denied her. They are not hers. Before she can employ them, they must have been worn by the fowl, or wrought by the worm, or grown spontaneous among the productions of the earth. And as to her form, her features, her stature, their regularity or defects, over all this she has no control. Wait but a few years, and, if death have not brought on a still more horrid deformity, you will see the gay enchantress bent with decrepitude, furrowed with wrinkles, and dragging out a miserable existence, under the complicated evils of envy, neglect, peevishness, and disease.

Next comes the man of wealth, the fortunate speculator, he whose countless hoards render him an object of envy to so many of his fellow-beings, who commands every pleasure, and who is able by his riches to shake even the monarch's throne.—Rich man, *who art thou?* Still a worm of the earth, a child of sorrow and of misery. With all thy wealth, I see thy distempered frame writhing in the agonies of disease; I see thy breast torn with distracting cares, a thousand fears and solicitudes perpetually assaulting thee.—With all thy wealth, the laborer who tills thy field has a slumber more secure and sweet, a lighter heart, a purer joy. Even the beggar at thy door laughs, while thou art sad; eats his broken food with more relish and freedom, and thrives upon his casual meal while thou art sickening

before a table loaded with dainty and expensive viands. With all thy wealth, I see the tyrant death aiming at thee his unerring blow. In vain are thy coffers opened to the professors of the healing art, thou canst not purchase a reprieve. Thy soft and richly embroidered couch cannot allay the pangs of disease: and, as to thy riches, thy heirs are only waiting for thy departure to grasp and squander them. . . . .

But let us quit the rich sensualist, and direct our attention to a higher order of attainments: the qualifications of the immaterial mind. And here I see the man of genius and letters, acknowledging, with a smile of conscious superiority, the littleness and baseness of what the world admires and loves. It is the mind, the godlike, the immortal mind that he cultivates. It is the vast region of science that he explores. It is the world of nature and of art, the whole universe, the great economy of the creation, that he investigates. In this he spends his days and his nights, and looks down with contempt on the low and vulgar herd that rise not above the level of sensual enjoyments. To him, then, in the last place, let us put the searching question —Man of science, *Who art thou?* An ephemeral creature, whose little mind, aided by the light and experience of myriads of it fellow-worms, is enabled to form a notion of some of the laws which a part of the mighty universe obeys. A summer's insect, which appears in the morning, stretches his weak vision round his little horizon, sees, admires, half knowledge, half conjecture, looks big with its vast discoveries, then sinks and disappears. Nothing around him but secrets and mysteries: even himself is a mystery to himself; for as to this mind, on whose excellence he so much prides himself, its nature, its operations, its powers, all is a sealed book. Thus, at the very outset, even at himself baffled and confounded, shall he deserve credit for wisdom and extensive views? Shall he be thought to have read the secrets of the great universe, who is an utter stranger even to himself? And yet it would seem that knowledge, comparatively at least, is one degree of perfection. Be it so: but whence did it arise?—for, not to speak of innumerable contingencies, for which the man of science deserves no praise, as not being under his influence, does he owe it to himself that his mind was framed with this or that degree of acuteness, with

those precise talents and capabilities? *Which of you*, says our Blessed Redeemer, *by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?* The science, on which the man of letters would ground his claim of pre-eminence, is all of adventitious growth. Had the Almighty been pleased to fashion him otherwise, had he placed him out of the reach of those attainments, on which he so much prides himself, could he have complained, as if he had been deprived of any thing that was his due? Shall the thing formed,—to use the beautiful expression of the apostle,—shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, *why hast thou made me thus?* or, *hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another to dishonor?* Hence, highly as the man of science may rate the glimmerings of his little mind, there is nothing in them native and inherent; nothing that can raise him, in real intrinsic worth, above the lowest of the human race.

Such, then, fellow-christians, is the child, now that he has ripened to maturity. His highest views, if confined to earth, partake of the littleness of his origin. The objects of his hopes, his ambition, his cares, and his labors, are all like himself, trivial and vain. *And when I turned myself*, says Ecclesiastes, *to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labors wherein I had labored in vain, I saw in all things anxiety and vexation of mind, and that nothing was lasting under the sun.*

But if the answer to the question in the text be thus humbling to us in our commencement and in our progress, whichever road we take in life, will it be less so at the conclusion of our little day? And here, as one description served for us all at our entrance into the busy scene, so one description will comprehend us all at our exit. Continuing, then, the application to ourselves, let us, in this new relation to the future, individually again put the searching question—Who art thou? My brethren, you know the answer. Harsh, unpleasing as it is, it cannot be concealed. A lifeless corpse, a loathsome mass of putrefaction, a heap of mouldering dust. Soon must thy fondly cherished frame cease its vital functions; those pliant limbs be cold and stiff; that bright eye become dull and motionless; and the heart, high beating now with the ebb and flow of the purple stream of life, palpitate no more! *Then shall the mourners go*

about the streets, and man shall go down into the house of his eternity. That house is the silent grave; a few feet of earth, as great for the poor as for the rich; the same for the monarch as for the meanest of his vassals. There shalt thou lie disregarded and forgotten; the wild flower shall spring from the earth above thee, the passenger, engaged and absorbed in life's little cares, shall tread over the spot as heedless of thy situation, and of the lesson thou art preaching him from the dust, as thou now art of those who have gone before thee. Trace we more closely the work of dissolution, that is proceeding in thy lifeless frame? Alas! how horrid are the details! To the paleness of death succeeds the livid hue of corruption. Then follows the decomposition of the internal parts, the offensive odour, the worm of putrefaction. Within and without, myriads of impure insects are rioting on the corrupted mass. The sinews and firmer membranes resist a little longer. These too are soon consumed, and lo! a hideous, shapeless skeleton is left, fast mouldering to congenial dust. Christians! frightful and disgusting as is the spectable, has it nothing to do with the question before us? Ah! remember, proud man, that the horrid carrion just contemplated is, at this very moment, an integral part of thyself. That it is thine own body, of which thou art so careful and so fond. Thyself! *thy pride*, says Isaiah, *is brought down to hell, thy carcass is fallen down, under thee shall the moth be strewn, and worms shall be thy covering.* Here, then, concludes the first part of the answer to the great question of the text. We have seen ourselves in our various natural relations to time, according to the three great divisions of it, the past, the present, and the future; it still remains, that we continue the investigation by considering further, who and what we are in the order of grace and in relation to eternity.

And, my brethren, if, as we have already seen, sorrow and infirmity, and ignorance and death be our lot under our first relation, a still more desolating portion has been the lot of our inheritance, with regard to the second. *Thou sayest*, says the truth of God to the bishop of Laodicea, *I am rich and made wealthy, and have need of nothing; and knowest not, that thou art wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Alas! of thyself how truly wretched! Even at thy first en-

trance into being, thou madest thy appearance as an outcast among all the works of God. They, from the first moment of their creation, obeyed submissive the voice of his orders; thou wast no sooner numbered among creatures than the stigma of rebellion marked thy unhallowed front. The vilest, the lowest of the irrational creation ranked above thee. God, thy creator, he whose judgment is truth, beheld thee with abhorrence. He regarded thee as the slave of Satan, the devoted victim of Hell's merciless flames. From this degraded state, destitute and powerless as thou wast, thou never couldst have raised thyself to the lowest degree of consideration or merit in his eyes. Without a new and second birth, thy first creation was but the sure prelude to eternal wo. When in the sacred laver of baptism thou wast cleansed from the deep-struck stain, great, I acknowledge, was the favor, the dignity conferred. If thou hast persevered uncontaminated and innocent, many and pressing are the motives that oblige thee to gratitude, none that ought to render thee presumptuous or proud.

For, besides that the benefit of regeneration was a favor altogether gratuitous and undeserved, what art thou still, with all thy gifts, and even innocence, but a being full of misery and surrounded by a thousand perils?

What is thy mind, but the seat of ignorance and error, the thoroughfare of a thousand vain thoughts and distractions? What is thy heart, but a domestic traitor, ever ready to surrender the castle of thy soul to thy mortal foes? What thy senses, but so many open passes for the enemy, where thou must keep strong and incessant guards if thou wouldst prevent him from entering? Amid such perils, if thou hast succeeded in escaping destruction, rare has been thy exemption. Yet art thou for this more secure? The least relaxation, the least self-confidence may at any time rob thee of the precious boon of innocence. The very pillars of heaven have been shaken and overturned; a thought, a moment was sufficient to change Lucifer and his companions from brilliant spirits of light into hideous demons. Weak and prone as thou art to evil, canst thou depend on thy firmness and perseverance? Such, my brethren is the language which may be held even to the innocent and just. But how rare is the privilege! How few can

say they have not sinned! A vast majority of mankind have, to the weight of original corruption, added that of voluntary, deliberate, actual sins; and these, as most subject to deception, it principally imports to become acquainted with themselves. To each one of this numerous class I will next address myself.

Wilful sinner, then, stand forth, and say, *Who art thou?* A rebel against thy Maker; a wretch, who, with fiend-like presumption, hast dared to raise thy head against the God who made thee, and to say to him, *I will not obey.* A traitor, who after having sworn allegiance to the King of Heaven, hast dared to betray him, and to sell thyself, for some base gain, some filthy pleasure, to his declared foes. A monster of ingratitude, who, after the most signal favors, hast turned thy back on thy benefactor, loaded him with outrages, and employed his very benefits to injure and provoke him. A self-murderer, who, in the extreme of madness, hast loathed life, and desperately plunged even thy very soul into eternal death. At the very moment in which thou sinnedst, the wo of Omnipotence came upon thee. Covered with the most frightful of leprosies, execrated and abhorred by the spirits of heaven, thy soul was consigned over, as a vile slave to the enemy of God and man, to share with him his furies and his punishment. Approach, then, the confines of the dismal abyss; mark, in the midst of its devouring flames, the spot which thou hast chosen to be thine eternal habitation; see, in the degraded forms which people this vast receptacle of the wicked, the companions, to whose society thou hast bound thyself for ever; hear, in its blasphemies, its weeping, its wailing and gnashing of teeth, the sounds that, for a whole eternity, are to strike upon thine ear. Ah! the very description fills us with horror. Yet, mistake not; it is thyself, wretched sinner, thine own inheritance, that thou art considering. All this thou hast made thine own, by consenting to mortal sin. In the first moment of thy rebellion, was uttered the decree of death. That moment, in very truth, wast thou suspended over the yawning precipice, and nothing but the most frail, the most uncertain of all fragile things, the brittle thread of life, prevented thee from being precipitated into the horrid abyss. Go then, and with this spectacle of thyself before thee, call into view that which the false optics of thy pride

and self-love so often behold. Esteem thyself great, and learned, and rich, and amiable. Triumph in thy accomplishments, thy virtues, thy merits, thy performances: indulge in the fond conceit, that thou art greater and better than thy neighbour. Storm and be indignant when others cross and contradict thee. Look upon pleasures, gratifications, and honor, as thy due. Glory in the applause, the admiration, the flattery of men. Then, try the fitness of all this to thy real self: weigh and consider how it suits that wretched victim of eternal flames, that slave of the devil, that outcast in the creation, which thou hast just beheld.

And here, my brethren, it may not be improper to meet an answer which will doubtless have already suggested itself to many, who, in the retrospect of their lives, have to accuse themselves of the commission of mortal sin. It is, that by having had recourse to the sacrament of penance, they have recovered the state of grace, and consequently are not included in the number of those who verify the horrid description that has just been given.* A consolatory plea indeed, and certainly available, could it be made good. But of whom, let us ask, if not of sinners of this description, was uttered that fearful sentence, *Man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.* You have sinned; of this, you have a fixed undoubted assurance. But have you the same certainty, that you have repented as you ought? You were once, through your own fault, the object of heaven's malediction; have you since, by condign contrition, so applied to yourself the blood of our Redeemer as to blot out the exterminating curse? You have received the absolution of your offences at the tribunal of penance; but has it been with the dispositions necessary for its ratification at the tribunal of the Almighty? What shall we say? Heretofore it was expected and required from the sinner, that he should spend years in weeping and doing penance, before his admittance to the sacrament of reconciliation. And is not God still the same? Is not sin still as heinous in his sight? And may it not justly be apprehended, that a contrition, which passeth with the hour, which appears only in words, but is not perceived by a change of life, is altogether illusory, and has left thee still under the guilt of sin, still chained in wretched servitude under the do-

minion of the prince of darkness? One thing, at least, is certain, that, however complete, however sincere may have been thy repentance, nothing can change the past. For ever, for all eternity, it will be true, that thou hast been a traitor to thy God, and that, while thou wert under the guilt of sin, there was not in the whole range of creation a being more degraded and despicable than thyself.

Thus, then, fellow-Christians, have I endeavored, as I proposed, briefly to elucidate the interesting question suggested in the Gospel of this day, with the proper answer to which it is so important for you to be acquainted. In conclusion, it only remains, that I exhort you often to revert to the same useful inquiry, and to employ it as a counter-charm against the enchantments of self-love, the bewitchings of vanity, the delirium of pleasure, the enervating influence of wealth. When the victorious generals of ancient Rome were decreed the honors of a triumph, it was wisely ordained that a herald should accompany the hero's car, and in the midst of the pageant occasionally exclaim, *Remember that thou art mortal.* In the same manner, wisely would you act, if, in the midst of all those empty pageants and occupations which diversify the little journey of life, you would often individually put to yourselves the interrogation in the text. When the world smiles upon you, and your heart already flutters with its applause and adulation, correct the evil impression by seriously and sedately asking yourself, *Who art thou?* When the workings of self-love render you harsh in your judgments, supercilious in your carriage, uncharitable in your conduct towards your neighbor, again employ the useful interrogatory. When you are moved by the fear of human censures, when a rebuke or contradiction disturbs your peace, quell the rising tumult, by looking inward and saying to yourself with all sincerity, *Who art thou?*

Thus, by the practice of frequent and diligent self-examination, you will effectually promote true humility; that virtue which is the surest path to happiness here and to eternal joy hereafter.

Sermon IV.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent.

ON THE INCARNATION.

There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not.—JOHN i. 26.

THE reproach with which St. John here upbraids the Jews, is not inapplicable to Christians. Selected by the Almighty to be a chosen generation, purchased at no less a price than the blood of his Son, instructed in the school of a God-Man, encouraged by his example and assisted by his graces, will they not, on examination, be found generally insensible of the favors conferred by their divine benefactor? That a God, who fills with his presence the heavens and the earth, and the whole created universe, and who possesses every attribute of perfection in an infinite degree, should, for the sake of his rebellious creatures, condescend to lay aside the splendor of the Divinity, assume the nature and infirmities of man, be born in affliction, live in distress, and die upon a cross, is indeed a mystery which no limited imagination could ever have conceived, and which no created understanding will ever be able fully to comprehend: yet, harsh as such truths sound to the fastidious ear of human reason, subversive as they are of all those long-cherished ideas of dignity and of honor, which previously held, and which still hold the world in error; they form at once the sublimest object of the Christian's faith, the firmest foundation of his hope, the most powerful motive for his gratitude and love. The Church, which at no time is forgetful, in her worship, of the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, has selected the time of Advent for its particular commemoration. Putting into the mouth of her ministers the devout aspirations of hope and desire,

which the prospect of this great event drew from the patriarchs and prophets of the old law, she invites all her children to concur in expressing, by repeated acts of thanksgiving and love, their sense of so beneficent a mystery. With the same view, it is to this great mystery that I propose this day to direct your attention, which I shall do by considering it, in the first place, as it is an object of the Christian's faith; in the second, as it is an object of his gratitude and love.

Under one of these aspects, I lately presented the subject to your consideration. I then proved, that the Jesus who was crucified, and whom we worship, *is the Christ, the Son of the living God*, from the verification, in him, of all the prophecies which relate to the Messiah,—prophecies most minute and circumstantial, delivered not at one time, but at intervals, during a long series of ages—prophecies, which, at the time of their publication, commanded respect on account of the wisdom, the virtue, and the miraculous powers of those by whom they were dictated, and which, from that day to the present, have been, and still are, preserved from interpolation by the vigilance of a people most jealous of their sacred records, and singularly hostile to the Christian faith. But, from my having then rested the truth of Christianity on this single fact, let it not be imagined that the testimony of inspiration is the only evidence to which the Christian can appeal in defence of his belief. Had the coming of the Messiah been neither promised by God, nor expected by mankind, nor foretold by the prophets, nor prefigured in the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, still is it so wonderful in its completion, so superior to all human calculation, so great and dignified in all its circumstances, so stamped with the broad seal of the Divinity, that an enravished world would have been necessitated to exclaim, *Truly this man is the Son of God.*

And first of all, if we consider the condition, the conduct, or the doctrine of Jesus Christ, what is there that does not bespeak a power and a foresight infinitely superior to the feeble ideas and calculations of man? In human actions and human designs, the probability of success is judged of by appearances, and the external adequateness of the means employed; in any great and hazardous attempt, a thousand measures are taken to remove obstacles, and facilitate the end proposed. Corruption,

violence, flattery, address the prejudices and passions of man; all things are engaged to promote success. Nothing of this is observable in the conduct of the world's Redeemer. Issuing from an obscure corner of Galilee, he suddenly appears in the midst of the metropolis of Judea. He possesses neither human learning, nor riches, nor connections, to recommend him. Unprotected and alone, he boldly declares at an end a religious code, which the Divinity himself had sanctioned, and the observance of ages confirmed. He condemns, as guilty of hypocrisy and pride, men whom the veneration of the multitude had almost deified. He proposes, for the acceptance of Jews and Gentiles, a new religion, sublime indeed, but utterly repugnant to all received ideas and opinions. For the accomplishment of so extraordinary an undertaking, he selects from the dregs of the populace twelve individuals, destitute, like himself, of every human recommendation. To these he gives the unheard-of commission of converting every nation of a refined and corrupted world! Far from meeting with that success which would have given eclat to the novel enterprise, and which might seem necessary for the encouragement of his adherents, he finds on every side nothing but opposition. Priests and elders, magistrates and people, all conspire in plotting his destruction. Betrayed into the power of his adversaries, he is dragged by them to the tribunal of justice, where, deserted by all his followers, he is condemned as a visionary, and dies as a malefactor.

Christians! can it be that such a man should gain credit, when he declares himself to be the envoy of the Divinity? and asserts that the religion, which he has thus attempted to establish, shall be universal and eternal, and supersede alike the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, and the superstitious rites of paganism? Can it be that such a man should subdue the proud spirits of the lords and potentates of the earth? That he should triumph over the learning of philosophers, the power of kings, the eloquence of orators? But perhaps his doctrine will be found so fascinating and alluring, so flattering to the inclinations of the human heart, as instantly to engage the suffrages of mankind. Oh, no! In the doctrines of Christ, nothing is discoverable but declarations of a nature most repugnant to the passions of man; truths, harsh to flesh and blood; mysteries,

humiliating to the proud pretensions of human reason. But were not the promises which he held out to his followers of a nature so imposing, the rewards which he bade them expect so congenial to their inclinations, as to captivate his auditors, and secure him adherents? Nothing could be less calculated to produce such an effect. While it is the character of imposture to stimulate its partizans by the prospect of sensual gratifications, Jesus restrains even the thoughts and desires of his followers. While the uncommissioned innovator rouses the activity and zeal of his adherents by hopes of success, licentiousness, and plunder, Jesus declares to his disciples, that poverty, affliction, ignominy, and death are to attend their exertions. *As the world*, does he say to them, *has persecuted me, they will also persecute you; they will put you out of the synagogue: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God.*

How, then, shall we account for the wonderful extension of his doctrine? By what unheard-of means has he subdued the rich and the poor, the weak and the mighty, and made every people, from the rising to the setting sun, bow down their heads at the name of a crucified man? Oh! it is by an argument, which neither sophistry can refute, nor prejudice withstand, nor malice contravene. It is by employing a testimony, neither to be misconstrued nor denied. *The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night sheweth knowledge. There are no speeches nor languages where their voices are not heard. Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.* It is that through all her works nature proclaims him her author and her God! *Go and tell John*, he himself says, when asked by the disciples of the Baptist to tell them if he were truly the Christ, *Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed.* Through all the ignominy and humiliations which he suffers, constant irradiations of omnipotence testify his divinity and the truth of his mission. Is he born in a stable, laid in a manger, and clothed with the mean weeds of poverty? At the same moment, a celestial luminary points out his abode, angelic choirs announce his nativity, and

prostrate kings present oblations at his feet. Is he persecuted by the blind and blood-thirsty ambition of a jealous tyrant, obliged to flee from his native soil? Yet are the oracles of the gods struck dumb, and all the idols of Egypt cast down, at his approach. Does he pass his youth in obscurity and subjection at Nazareth, and ascend annually to the Paschal solemnity, as if he were bound by the injunctions of the Mosaic law? Yet, even in this tender age, does he place himself among the chiefs and elders of Israel, confound them by his interrogatories, and astonish them by his replies. If, after entering on his mission, he is poor and destitute, and hath not where to lay his head, still is the whole of nature obedient to his voice, still do the powers of hell confess their subjection to him, and still does he exhibit, on mount Thabor, a glimpse of the ravishing splendor of his divinity. If he be baptized, like a sinner, by the Baptist, in the purifying waters of the Jordan, he is at the same time proclaimed by a voice from heaven, to be the beloved Son of the Eternal Father, in whom he is well pleased. If he suffers himself to be bound and fettered by an armed band, it is not till he has cast them prostrate at his feet, and wrought an evident miracle in favor of one of their company. If he yields to the fury of his persecutors, is dragged like a criminal to execution, and expires on the cross, all nature shudders at the tremendous spectacle. The rocks are split, the earth is shaken, the sun obscured. If, like the rest of the children of Adam, he descends unattended to the silent tomb, yet does he arise glorious and triumphant, the conqueror of death and of hell. If, in fine, he commissions the weak and destitute apostles to carry his name and his doctrine to the uttermost bounds of the earth, he at the same time gives them power to authenticate their mission by the most stupendous miracles, inflames their hearts with courage and with zeal, gives eloquence to their lips, and force to their words, and prepares, by his grace, the souls of their hearers for the reception of the truths which they announce.

Thus has the lowly and humble Jesus succeeded in subduing the passions and prejudices of a benighted world, cast down for ever the usurped dominion of hell, and extended the belief of his doctrine, and his name, to every nation under heaven. Genius of Infidelity! Either in these traits acknowledge the

hand of the Deity, or obliterate from the soul of man the very idea of a God, who essentially loves truth, and can never lend the arm of his Omnipotence to propagate deceit. Either disprove the truth of the miracles of Christ, or cease, by insidious and degrading allusions, to blaspheme your Redeemer and your God. Christians, if the mystery of the incarnation be incomprehensible to human reason, let it be our constant care, since we find it attested on every side by evidence that cannot be called in question, to reject every proud thought of opposition against its possibility. Let us never be ashamed of the name and character of Christians, but, in an age of error and infidelity, let us still glory with St. Paul in the cross of Christ. At the same time, let us not fail to hold in grateful remembrance the stupendous benefits which an incarnate God has conferred upon mankind. To this consideration I shall dedicate the remainder of my discourse.

It was remarked of St. Peter of Alcantara, that he never spoke of the mystery of the incarnation, without betraying in his countenance the inward jubilation that filled his soul. And indeed, on whatever side we contemplate this mystery, we shall find it so fraught with advantages, so indicative of an infinite love, as to demand a constant return of acknowledgment, thanksgiving, and praise, from every individual of the human race. Indeed, limited reason is incapable of adequately comprehending the treasures of mercy, of grace, and of love, which the incarnation unfolds. Unable alike to soar to the elevated nature of the Divinity, or to fathom the depths of misery and disgrace into which the sin of Adam had plunged mankind, it in vain seeks for ideas to conceive, or terms to express the prodigy of love by which an offended God assumes an equality with his offending creatures; and, lost in admiration, has only power to exclaim: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou shouldst visit him?*

To form, however, some conception of the benefits which the incarnation of the Son of God has conferred upon the human race, let us take a view of the state of the world previously to that event. Deplorable, indeed, are the details which history exhibits. Enslaved by sensual and brutish passions, man had obliterated from his soul all remembrance of the end for which

he was created. Perverted in his reason, he had prostituted to creatures the homage which he owed to his Maker, had trembled before divinities which his own hands had formed, and bowed his head, though destined to rule over the rest of the creation, in prostrate adoration before the irrational brute. Revenge, ebriety, lust, and deceit, personified in the characters of the vilest of men, swelled the abominable catalogue of his divinities; while their rites were solemnized by the commission of every excess. Add to this the absurd and unsettled notions which had obtained in relation to the human soul, the rewards and punishments of a future life, virtue and vice, and the object that was to constitute the supreme felicity of man. If, amid the profound gloom that hung over the world, the sublime conceptions of some among the philosophers seem to shed a temporary brightness, they will be found, on examination, rather to have deluded mankind by a fallacious appearance of reason and plausibility, than to have conducted them in security to the path of truth, as the faint glimmerings of the nocturnal vapours cheer but to deceive, and entice only to destroy. Convinced by the light of reason of the absurdity of vulgar errors, they had neither courage nor force to oppose the prejudices and passions of their contemporaries, and their systems, compounded of truth and falsehood, of just conceptions and extravagant conceits, remain eternal monuments of the weakness and insufficiency of abandoned man. Nor were such scenes of delusion confined to the remote and barbarous periods of society: Greece, at the most polished era of her existence,—Rome, at the zenith of her glory and literary eminence, was enslaved by the wildest superstition. The legislator, the philosopher, and the orator, while they gained, by the superiority of their conceptions and talents, the applause of their own and the admiration of every succeeding age, labored under the most deplorable blindness in relation to the only science that could confer happiness on the human heart.

Such, fellow-christians, was the state of society and morals when Christ the Redeemer appeared among mankind. At that instant, the vast fabric of pagan superstition was shaken to its foundation. A new order of things was commenced. The first dawn of the Aurora of truth dissipated the darkness which had so long enveloped the moral world. The fundamental doctrines

of one only Deity, of Providence, of the soul's immortality, arose pure and unobscured from the gloom in which they had hitherto lain concealed. The truths of an hereafter, of the origin and end of man, of the corruption of nature, and of the necessity of Redemption, were now displayed to the view of the world. The false systems of a Plato, a Pythagoras, a Zeno, and an Epicurus, quickly disappeared at the sound of the name of Christ. The doctrines of philosophy were at best changeable, confined, and uncertain, like their authors; those of the Gospel were fixed, immutable, and universal. Here was no invidious distinction; the rich and the poor, the weak and the strong, the learned and the ignorant, were equally the objects of its concern. *For there is no distinction of the Jew and the Greek; for the same is Lord over all, rich to all that call upon him. Man, when he was in honor did not understand, he hath been compared to senseless beasts, and hath been made like to them.* But now, by the light of the Gospel, was exhibited to him the real dignity of his nature; his ideas were elevated from earth to heaven; the lost empire of reason was restored; and in his thirst after happiness, his attention was directed to the only object that was capable of satiating the desires of his heart. Hence, were we to regard the Redeemer in no other light than as a legislator and teacher, sent from heaven to correct the erroneous notions of mankind, and to direct them in the path of happiness and virtue, still would he be entitled to a constant return of thanksgiving and praise as the general benefactor.

But it is not to be imagined that to such benefits were confined the views of God, in the Incarnation of his Son. By him who regards this mystery with the eyes of faith, who beholds in Christ the God and the man, and who considers for what and for whom he has become incarnate, by him only can some conception, though still inadequate, be formed of the magnitude of the benefits conferred upon mankind. The wretched children of Adam, after the sin of their first parents, could never have offered to the offended majesty of heaven a satisfaction in any degree equivalent to the magnitude of the offence. In vain did the altar smoke with incense, and stream with the blood of victims. *To what purpose do you offer me victims? saith the Lord. To what purpose do you bring me frankincense from*

Saba, and sweet-smelling cane from a far country? Your holocausts are not acceptable, nor are your sacrifices pleasing to me. It is impossible, says St. Paul, *that with the blood of oxen or of goats sins should be taken away.* By rebelling against God, man had become the enemy of his Maker, had forfeited his title to heaven, and debased his nature beneath the level of the irrational creation. He had chosen the arch-fiend for his guide and associate; and death and hell must have been his eternal lot. Christians, if we are not still doomed to such calamities, it is to the mystery of the incarnation that we owe our deliverance. *Christ for us has become obedient unto death,* and, in taking flesh, *hath taken upon himself the iniquity of us all. He hath blotted out the handwriting of the decree that was against us;* he has raised our nature from the corruption of sin, has made us a *chosen generation, a purchased people,* coheirs with himself, and sons of the Most High. Here, then, is revealed the mystery of an incarnate God. For man it was, for lost, offending, guilty man, that the Lord of nature has subjected himself to its laws, that the Author of life has become the victim of death. For us it was, and to cancel our offences, that he suffered, labored, wept, and died. If he is covered with ignominy, it is our pride that loads him with disgrace. If he is poor and unprotected, it is our hard-hearted avarice that occasions his distress. If he is mortified and afflicted, it is our criminal indulgences that scourge and afflict him. If he is sorrowful unto death, and weeps and bleeds in the garden, it is our indifference that occasions his distress. If, in fine, he consummates his sacrifice, and yields up his soul under the agonies of the cross, you, O sinner, it is, who, when you offend your God, pierce his hands and his feet, and nail him to the disgraceful tree. You, from eternity, were the object of his love; for your imitation did he spend thirty years in the laborious exercise of every virtue; for your direction has he given his precepts and his exhortations; for your encouragement has he made his promises; for your instruction has he wrought his miracles; for your support has he instituted his sacraments; for you has he offered up every action of his life, and for you does he pour forth his dying supplication. Oh! my brethren, suspend, I beseech you, for a moment, your admiration at these wonders of

loving omnipotence, and reserve your astonishment for quite another object,—the blindness and insensibility of ungrateful man.

To regard the conduct of the majority of Christians, who could think that the incarnation of a God entered into their creed? Who could believe that so inestimable a benefit should be followed by forgetfulness and contempt? The slightest favor deserves a kind acknowledgment, and he who should refuse it would be branded as a disgrace to his species. What then, shall we say of our own ingratitude, who, to the greatest of all benefits, the benefit of eternal redemption, purchased, not by the efforts of a feeble creature, but by the dying groans of a God-Man, dare, I will not say to refuse a return of love, but repeatedly to load with affronts and injuries our divine Benefactor? Oh! Christians, forget not, that to the Being, whose mercies we have been here contemplating, it is essential to be just, as it is to be merciful; that he, who is now your kind Redeemer, will shortly be your rigorous Judge; and that on the awful day of retribution, his humiliations and sufferings will appeal, not for forgiveness, but for wrath and vengeance on those who have persisted in ingratitude.

In conclusion, since we have seen the incarnation of the Son of God to be an event supported by proofs the most steady and undeniable—since we have seen it accomplished in a manner the most wonderful and divine, and productive of advantages as gratuitous as they are extensive and universal, let us not content ourselves with a vain and speculative belief of this mystery of love, but endeavor to be animated with that lively faith which worketh by charity. The only return which you are called on to make for such liberality is gratitude and love. Make this return, and, though you are discharging a debt due in strict justice, you will at the same time, (such is the boundless liberality of God,) entitle yourself to new and greater blessings. For, says Jesus Christ, *He that loveth me, shall be loved by my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and we will make our abode with him.* Oh, what a dignity is this! to be singled out as an object of the love of the Most High—to be the friend and entertainer of God! *Acknowledge, then, O Christian, thy own*

dignity, cries out St. Leo, *and return no more to thy former baseness by an unworthy life.* The true test of the love of God is the observance of his law. *He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.* If we, my friends, have been hitherto deficient in this important duty of love of our Redeemer, if we have been hitherto insensible to the wonders of mercy and goodness exhibited in the incarnation, and if we have alienated to temporal objects those hearts, which by so many titles belong to God, let us, by the fervor of our repentance, make amends for our past ingratitude. Particularly at this holy season of Advent, *let us make straight the way of the Lord*, as we are admonished in the Gospel, by removing from our hearts every obstacle to the reign of his love, every undue attachment to the world. Thus shall we receive that plenitude of grace exhibited in the incarnation—thus shall we become the friends God—thus shall we ever abide in Christ, and Christ in us, here by grace, hereafter in glory.

Sermon V.

Christmas Day.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

Glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will.—Luke ii. 14.

Such are the two great objects of the birth of Christ—to give glory to God and peace to man. Yes! though loud is the voice of nature in the praise of its Author, harmonious the songs of thanksgiving which the universe pours forth to its Creator, incessant the homages which the celestial choirs render to their eternal King, all dwindles and totally disappears when compared with that glory which the adorable Babe of Bethlehem this day offers to the Most High.

All *other* homage is essentially limited. Issuing from a finite and created source, it necessarily partakes of the imperfection of its origin. Presented to the Almighty, it may serve, in some sense, to beautify and adorn the creature that presents it; it cannot reflect any real refulgence on him who dwelleth in light inaccessible. For this day was it reserved to behold on earth, in a created substance, one who could give adequate glory to an infinite God. For who is this Babe, whom we here adore? It is the light of light, true God of true God. Creatures may shine with borrowed splendor—they may, like the stars of night, receive a foreign, an extraneous refulgence; God, to be really and adequately glorified, can be glorified by no other than himself. Like the luminary of day, it is only in the light of those beams which emanate from himself, that his magnificence is displayed. It is then by a God that a God is glorified. We have seen his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.

But that God is a God-Man. Human nature, in the first Adam had impiously struck at the Creator's glory; here human nature, in the second Adam, this day repairs the foul injury.—*Glory to God on high, and peace on earth to men of good will.* By refusing to his Creator the glory which was his due, man had brought on himself every calamity. From that moment, he, who was the friend, became the enemy of God, and from a child of benediction became a child of wrath. Anathematized by heaven he felt, through his whole nature, the effect of the bitter curse. Furious and contending passions filled his soul with war. Darkness and error overclouded his understanding. Insulting demons triumphed in his calamity, and the eternal death of hell was his inevitable lot. All this was in the order of the strictest justice. The God who was offended, owed it to himself thus to punish, thus to cast off the offender.

But on this day, forlorn, dejected, fallen nature, once more meets the smile of an appeased God. In that nature he beholds a person whose homage more than satisfies the claims of his injured justice. A man, in the crib of Bethlehem, gives glory to God; God, from the throne of inaccessible majesty, pronounces peace to man. *Glory to God on high, and on earth peace to men of good will.*—Yes, my brethren, on this day is the long expected, long desired, reconciliation accomplished; on this day mercy and truth have met each other, justice and peace have kissed. *Dearly beloved,* cries out St. Leo, on this occasion, *a Saviour is this day born to us; let us rejoice; can there be room for sorrow, on the birth-day of life?*

But, then, there are two kinds of joy; a true and a false joy; a joy springing from the consideration of the spiritual advantages derived from the birth of Christ, and a joy arising from the presence or prospect of sensual gratifications. Now, it is a melancholy truth, that the joy experienced at this season by the majority of Christians, is of this latter kind. Indeed, what does the conduct of the far greater part of men usually exhibit at this sacred time, but an utter contradiction of all the lessons which the Son of God holds forth in his birth.

Scenes of joy in the eyes of the world, but scenes of real sorrow in the eyes of religion and of truth. Scenes of intemperance and excess, scenes of ostentation and vanity, scenes of

dissipation and dangerous amusements. How few are found to join the sacred group at the manger, and how few, in consequence, partake of those spiritual and only real joys which are offered us at this holy season,—of that peace which it was the great object of Christ's coming to bestow. Speculatively, indeed, the followers of a master, the first lessons of whose school are humility and self-denial, but practically attached to the honors, riches, and pleasures of the world, they see no charms in the lowly scene of Bethlehem. Different, however, is the impression which the anniversary and contemplation of the birth of Christ produces on the genuine Christian. Applying to himself the address of the angel to the shepherds, when he announced to them the great event, he joins himself to their pious company, and with them exclaims, *Let us go over to Bethlehem, and see this wonder that is come to pass.* Thither, then, he hastens in spirit on this sacred night, and, O God! how exquisite is the pleasure which he experiences in being admitted to the lowly crib where his infant Saviour lies.

Here he beholds the Virgin Mother, standing in silent adoration and astonishment over her own offspring, her countenance and whole exterior speaking the entire annihilation of her soul; here St. Joseph, by turns absorpt in astonishment, or melted into tenderness, or eagerly assiduous in affording those attentions which the necessitous conjuncture requires. The dimly-burning taper faintly discovers the rude apartment. It is a rough cave, half-fenced from the keen blast of midnight, sheltering here the humble ass which had accompanied the holy pair from Nazareth, and there the patient ox, the usual tenant of the place. No pomp; no sign of worldly grandeur; no profane intruder is suffered to profane this sacred spot.

Here, then, fixed in admiration, does the genuine Christian exult in the wonders which faith points out in this humble scene. Yes! already does he behold this divine infant commencing his victorious career; already does he behold him exulting as a giant to run on his own way, and, even in the crib of Bethlehem, trampling under foot the devil and his works, the world and its pomps, the flesh and its lusts. Already does he behold him imparting those sublime lessons of wisdom which it was one great object of his coming to unfold; nor is this all. Beholding his

God, under the mean externals of infancy and poverty; recognising, under this rude appearance of abjection and distress, the uncreated wisdom of the eternal Father, the splendor of his glory, and the figure of his substance, the genuine Christian pours forth his soul before him in acts of profound adoration, love, gratitude, and praise.

The unsightly stable is, to the eye of faith, instantly transformed into the richest of palaces. In the humble matron, he sees the most favored of creatures; in the poor mechanic, the most honored of men. In the gloom and obscurity of the comfortless grotto, he beholds all the splendors which surround the throne of God; the attendant angels, the adoring seraphim, the exulting choirs of all the heavenly hosts: with these he joins his feeble voice, and, in raptures of love and admiration, exclaims: *To him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever.* My friends! what are your feelings, what your sentiments, on occasion of the spectacle exhibited this day? Does it fill you with that pure joy, with those correspondent feelings of love and of gratitude, which appear in the genuine Christian? Or does it find you cold and insensible, and intent rather on base and earthly gratifications? Again, what is the species of offering which you have prepared to present this day to your new born King?

Is it a pure, and humble, and undivided heart? Or is it a defiled heart,—a heart contaminated with pride or self-love, or debased by the love of some created and criminal object? If such it be, presume not to approach the sacred crib. The divine Infant would spurn from his presence so unhallowed an oblation. No! the pomp and pride of the world, the gratifications of sense, the inordinate attachments of flesh and blood, are not admitted to the stable of Bethlehem. If you would be there a guest, you must, like the holy shepherds, bring with you a simple and an humble heart,—a heart uncontaminated with sensual desires,—a heart pure from the defilements of earthly affection. With such an offering, you may securely enter. Jesus will receive you. Joseph and Mary will present you to him. And that such may be your happiness, is a blessing, &c.

Sermon IX.

Sunday within the Octave of Christmas.

MEN'S OPINIONS RECTIFIED.

Behold, this child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted.—LUKE ii. 34.

NEVER was a prophecy more exactly fulfilled than this of the venerable Simeon. The very year in which it was uttered witnessed its verification; from that to the present, each intervening period has corroborated its truth; and, only with the great universe itself, will its accomplishment terminate. In his infancy, a mark of contradiction to the jealous Herod; through his life, a mark of contradiction to the incredulous Jews; in the primitive centuries, a mark of contradiction to pagan persecutors; through every succeeding age, Jesus Christ has continued to be a mark of contradiction, not only to the heretical innovator, who, in opposing the Church and preferring his own conceits to her decisions, virtually gives the lie to the God of truth, but also to the profligate Catholic, who, bowing to the doctrinal mysteries which the Saviour of men proposes to his understanding, recklessly breaks through those checks and restraints which the same Saviour would impose upon his passions. Nor can I stop here; for not even here ceases the opposition of mankind to Jesus. He is contradicted by many among his professed disciples, who yet do not sink into avowed profligacy, but profess and feel a reverence for his law, and fondly hope that their conduct is regulated by his maxims.

To justify this assertion, to show that Jesus Christ is, at the present day, a mark of contradiction to the bulk even of Christians, it will not be necessary to select from the sacred volume

the more austere and difficult of his precepts, nor to depict him in those trying scenes of his life where he exemplifies those precepts to the very letter. It will be sufficient to turn once more to Bethlehem, and to compare the favorite opinions of men on the interesting subject of their own happiness, with the judgment there pronounced by heaven for their instruction. These opinions, although they differ in the different classes of society, although they are subject to countless modifications in individuals, yet admit of easy classification. For all the objects of human pursuit, however multitudinous in the detail, may be ranged under the two general heads of *pre-eminence* and *pleasure*.

To begin with *pre-eminence*,—under which term I wish to comprehend whatever flatters the pride of man, whether birth, fortune, beauty, strength, reputation or talents,—let us examine, in the first place, what our notions upon the subject are, and then contrast them with the decisions of infinite wisdom.

As God is, essentially, order, and as the beauty of his work depends on order, so that order depends on subordination. All cannot be equal: there must be low as well as high, little as well as great, poverty therefore as well as riches, obscurity and distinction, ignorance and learning, moderate and comparatively lofty talents. I say *comparatively;* for we might be satisfied to reflect, that nothing out of God is in itself little or great; it is so only by comparison; it is we that make it so; it is from our limited minds it borrows its dimensions: in infinitude, little and great equally disappear. Luminous and just as this first principle is, the bulk of mankind think, or at least wish, speak, and act, in direct opposition to it. No one seems at rest in the place, which eternal order has assigned him: all rise and swell above themselves, and, in heart, and desire, and judgment, rush into the sphere above them.

It is less surprising that he, who finds himself at the bottom of the scale, should be troubled with a wish of rising; but, as we ascend through the different gradations, we shall find that the delusion still mounts with us. The man of decent competence, at whose estate the poor beggar would bound his utmost wishes, can seldom view the splendor of the wealthy man without a commotion in his heart, if not a disturbance in his

judgment; and the wealthy man, in his turn, is looking up to some higher mark and sighing to attain it. The undistinguished commoner would be a noble, the noble a higher noble: the courtier of an inferior order, fixes his eye on the next degree above him, and fancies it the term of happiness; while its envied possessor, unconscious of any such happiness, is himself transferring his view, and forming a similar judgment on the next that precedes him: and thus the delusion mounts upwards to the throne of majesty itself. And do you believe that even there the aspiring terminates? History does not vouch it; it is a spirit that expands and inflames by elevation. Witness an Alexander, who, placed on the very pinnacle of human greatness, looked down with a sigh on his vast dominions, and actually wept that there was not another world for his ambition. Let this suffice for the gifts of fortune; those of nature are not less subject to mistake. The former, being confessedly foreign to the man, are more easily undervalued and resigned; the latter, being attached to the individual, whether conspicuous in his outward form, or beaming from his interior, it is more difficult for aspiring man to forego. Mediocrity of fortune many have been content with:—how few have acquiesced in mediocrity of mind! Accordingly, it seems scarcely possible for man to view these distinctions in another, without conceiving that they ought to be his own. It is long, perhaps, before he divests his youthful mind of the fond presumption that he is not without them; but when at length he does, when experience and a wider view has taught him his inferiority, then he turns his disappointed eye on those around him, and views with uneasiness every brighter object, as if he could not be happy without being distinguished. Hence, how seldom is it that those praises which encroach on our own, find a ready echo in our breasts? How hard, how repugnant is it to most men, to join cordially in the commendations of others, unless themselves have the credit of the suggestion? How easy, on the other hand, how natural is it to us to coincide with criticism and censure? Such are some of our erroneous feelings with respect to the comparative advantages of life. Let us, then, turn to the instructive scene presented to us in Bethlehem, and impartially consider the de-

cisive practical judgment there passed for us on this interesting subject.

All antiquity had prepared us to expect something extraordinary. The Patriarchs alluded to the future Messiah, the Prophets spoke of him in terms the most magnificent: he was to be a mighty King: he was to rule from sea to sea: he was to deliver all the nations of the earth. Who would not have expected, that so great a personage was to be ushered in by something extraordinary, by signs in the heavens, or prodigies on the earth? When the heavens were to bend and let down a Saviour, a God on the earth, who would not have conceived, that at least some bright messenger from above should first descend, and announce the approaching event? some angel should sound forth the warning trumpet over the expecting nations? Ah! no; this was for his second coming, a very different appearance from this. Let us attend to the manner of it. The emperor Augustus now reigned without a rival over the whole civilized world, and touched with the vanity of knowing the number of his subjects, or with the yet meaner motive of swelling his coffers with their contributions, issues a decree that all should repair to the city of their birth. Under this human decree, the announcement of the capricious will of a mortal, the coming God conceals his birth: this is the spring employed to set in motion the greatest event that ever happened. How does its very commencement confound all our vain notions! *At that time went forth a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. And Joseph went up out of Galilee from Nazareth into the city of Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, that he might be enrolled with Mary his spouse, who was with child.* Let us here watch every circumstance, the whole is carefully prepared for our instruction.

Joseph and Mary were indeed of blood royal, the prophecies requiring it; but this circumstance only rendered their poverty and obscurity the more humiliating: and these were the parents whom the King of kings chose to preside over his birth. Bethlehem was the least and the most insignificant of the cities of Judea:—in Bethlehem, therefore, he would be born. He seems in every circumstance, to aim a blow at our vanity and ambition.

When arrived at the royal city, we may at least anticipate for him a hospitable, if not a triumphant reception. But no! the humble pair, as the Gospel text intimates, first applied at the inns and public accommodations of the place, but the conflux of visiters had filled them all, and in the language of the text, *there was no room for them.* After this, we may naturally suppose, that they had recourse to some of their yet surviving relatives and friends; but, whether these also could not accommodate them, or were ashamed of their humble appearance, no one received them; and thus we may conceive these descendants of the blood royal, those depositaries of the great treasure, the expectation of nations, ignominiously wandering from house to house, abruptly rejected at one, dismissed with cold professions at another, at all unsuccessful.

And observe, now, the wonderful conduct of Providence, that is to say, of the coming Saviour himself, who selected and secretly prepared every circumstance. Just at that time, in that hour of disgrace, when his parents were actually outcasts from society, then it was that he chose to issue forth into the world. His Virgin Mother at that moment felt the mystic hour approach, and that she must give to the world its promised Saviour. *Now it happened,* says St. Luke, *when they were there, her days were completed, that she should bring forth. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapt him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.* The inference then is, that finding no better retreat in their necessity than an old shed where beasts were lodged for the night, they retired under its poor shelter; and in that situation, too wretched, it would seem, even for the most indigent, the Saviour of man came into the world; and, for want of better accommodations, was laid in a manger, the common manger, where the beasts were feeding. Such is the palace in which the Saviour King would be born; such the royal cradle in which his infant limbs were deposited; such the regal robes, such the insignia he had prepared for his sacred person. Tradition gives him for his attendants on the occasion the humblest of the beasts of the field; and the context informs us who were the courtiers invited to compliment him,—a few simple shepherds who were keeping the night watches in the vicinity.

Thus has Jesus pointedly condemned all our vain ideas of pre-

eminence. We would be the first: he makes himself the last. We would be born in greatness and splendor: he buries himself in the depth of obscurity. We would shine in conspicuous opulence: he covers himself with all the ignominy of poverty. We would be noticed and honored: he is overlooked and despised. We would be esteemed wise and knowing: he arrays himself in simplicity and littleness. We, in fine, would shine and be pre-eminent in genius, talents, and every excellence; and in order to cure us effectually of so false and erroneous and disorderly an ambition, he, the Eternal Wisdom, descends at once to the lowest pitch of human weakness, to a situation which no one ever envied, the weeping, speechless, and helpless infant. So much for our ideas of pre-eminence. I proceed now to the other branch of our erroneous opinions, those which regard *pleasure.*

By *pleasure,* I here understand all those things which contribute to the corporal ease, comfort, and gratification of man: another copious source of mistake and prejudice. What are the favorite opinions of men on this subject? Too many, alas, are so intent upon it, as to make it their first and capital object, sacrifice to it their eternal interests, seize it eagerly in every shape, and when the most sacred laws interfere and forbid it, openly spurn at the prohibition. I trust that the present audience, professedly assembled in obedience to those laws, does not contain many of this class. But there are thousands, who, without going to this extreme, stand much in need of the instruction of the present festival. There are, in the first place, many, even among Christians, who are not ashamed to pursue what is called a life of pleasure, who would pretend to reconcile with the Gospel a constant round of amusements, and make self-enjoyment their main business. There are, next to these, numbers, perhaps I might say the bulk of the wealthy and easy circumstanced, who think all the comforts and conveniences of life their natural right; who will not forego any of the numerous contrivances invented for man's ease and luxury, while they see around them thousands destitute of the common necessaries of life; whose whole study would seem to be to keep off contradiction and inconvenience, and guard the path of life from every little asperity. as if this world were not proclaimed and destined to be a valley of tears, as if they would evade or reverse the sworn sentence

of the Almighty, that man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, and shall find briers and thorns the inexterminable growth of his habitation.

But there is another class still more numerous, or rather universal. If all do not pursue pleasure, we all err in a point closely allied to it; we all of us shun pain. We will not believe that this can ever in any way be our interest, much less our duty; we regard it as a barren and insufferable evil, ever fly in alarm from every appearance of it, and elude it with all our art and vigilance. And yet we cannot be ignorant, that without pain we cannot know true pleasure; that in the state of probation it is a natural and a necessary evil; that it is the indispensable price of virtue; that salvation is not to be secured without it: we cannot but be aware, that guilty pleasure must be followed by expiatory pain, that we have rashly snatched at the former, and must be content to be acquainted with the latter; and that while the Almighty in his mercy takes away the guilt of our sins, he still leaves us in his wisdom and justice a certain debt of pain necessarily to be discharged, either in this life by our own acceptance, or in the other by his infliction. All these descriptions of persons will find their appropriate lesson in the stable: let us then turn again to the instructive scene.

As for pleasure, positive and studied pleasure, what single trace do we here discover of it? What single circumstance is there in the scene before us, to give the least countenance to our strong propensity for self-gratification? There is evidently a studied absence, a most careful exclusion of every human joy, of every earthly satisfaction. The bare recital of the event has made this so obvious, that I need not insist on it. Let us then advance a step farther, and see how much we can discover of that common and generally thought indispensable kind of pleasure, which is comprised in the comforts of life. Certainly no birth scene ever presented less of them. It is an occasion on which the poorest are provided; yet here are neither the requisite clothes for wrapping the tender limbs of infancy, cradle or couch to receive the tender form, nor even a common apartment to be born in. The humble appendages of Mary's poverty serve for the first; a crib for the second; and for the third an open night-stall for cattle. Such is the amount of

comforts here provided. Let us proceed another step, and see if we cannot derive yet a farther instruction. A little reflection will discover to us, that there is here, not only an absence of pleasure, but a presence of positive pain, that evil which is so much our dread; for, observe in the first place, the time and circumstances of the event, that the delicate and necessitous conjuncture takes place in the severest season of the year, in the keen air of a winter midnight, in the open exposure of an unprotected shed. And remember another circumstance not so obvious; infancy ever presents a painful and melancholy spectacle; it is a scene of helpless tears, wants, and distresses. But in other men, we know that its pains are little more than apparent; nature kindly interposes, and by withdrawing reason, and diminishing consciousness, deadens, and almost neutralizes its evils. In the divine infant, it is far otherwise; faith and theology teach us, that even at this early hour, reason and consciousness in him are already fully awake, nay, even mature and perfect, although he purposely conceals them under the ordinary indications of infantine simplicity. When, therefore, he breaks forth into that plaintive cry, which the wise man informs us is the first voice we utter on coming into this world of tears, we know that in him it is not purely mechanical, that he feels and suffers all that it so significantly expresses;—when he pours forth the tears which stream so copiously from the eyes of infancy, he is conscious of all that pain and bitterness which they so strikingly express;—when he shrinks from cold, and nakedness, and hunger, he is tremblingly alive to all their pangs; he feels them with all the helpless sensibility of infancy, and all the conscious maturity of manhood. This presents a contrast to pleasure which such an extraordinary personage alone could invent, and he alone could realize.

And now, having drawn closely together the two objects in question, having placed first the collective mass of our favorite opinions, and then in juxta-position the striking sentence pronounced upon them from heaven, let me ask, Is it not fair and rational to expect, that the scene which we have been contemplating should suffice to rectify our errors, and fix and regulate our judgment? For we are Christians; we know, we firmly believe, that it is God himself, who here descends to

instruct us. If it is God, first he is all-wise, and cannot but know what is good; secondly he is all right and just, and cannot but choose what is good; consequently, what he has chosen must be good. From these plain principles, see now what important conclusions follow for belief, as well as practice.

It follows, first, that pre-eminence is not happiness; that, in the sense in which I have taken it, it is not even an absolute good; that there is no moral advantage, therefore, in being distinguished for place, birth, honor, riches, dignity, or fame; consequently, that all our desires, and fears, and uneasinesses, and longings, are altogether thrown away on the subject, are all utterly idle and mis-spent; that there is even no absolute advantage in those personal and natural distinctions, which are so much the pride and boast of man, talents, endowments, qualifications; that they are only relative goods, of no merit in themselves to the possessor, and taking their name and character from his own use or abuse of them; a blessing, indeed, if well applied, but, if perverted, as they almost always are, a bane and a curse; and finally, that all these things are totally unconnected with his essential happiness. It follows, secondly, that pleasure likewise is not felicity; that the studied pursuit of it is the greatest of errors; that our solid happiness is not in proportion to our sublunary ease and worldly comfort; and that pain is not so pure and intolerable an evil, and may even, in due measure and mixture, be consistent with, and consolidate, our real interests.

In vain does corrupt nature rebel against these inferences: in vain does the world second the opposition, and, with its universal voice and conduct, endeavor to establish a negative against them. It is impossible, I do not say for the Christian, but for the rational and consistent being, to look upon this festival and not feel himself borne away by their evidence. Experience, too, if we would but listen to its voice, is quite in unison with them; our own individual experience, which has never been able yet steadily to contradict them, and the experience of mankind in general, which, from Solomon down to our own contemporaries in all ranks and conditions, has in life or in death been unanimous on the subject. If we will resist this evidence, and still labor in the teeth of all this experience, we must

charge the consequence on ourselves, nor pretend to complain, if we find this world truly a valley of tears and a land of labor, —of labor without profit and tears without consolation.

Such are the speculative conclusions suggested by the subject; its practical consequences are equally obvious and equally important. The least, certainly, that a Christian can do, is to give up all the errors and false maxims of the world, and to form his creed of happiness by what he here sees; to relax and forego all those pursuits and occupations which are at variance with it; to quell his ambition, to check his rivalry, to moderate his pursuit of worldly goods; to be content with his lot, if even under mediocrity; neither to dread poverty for himself, nor to despise it in others; to shun every species of voluptuousness; to fear pleasure even under its most innocent form; to be satisfied with those plain and ordinary comforts which the scanty wants of transitory man require; not to shrink so much from pain, nor to be so fearful of those hardships which Providence has scattered through life, nor of those salutary privations which penance superadds to them, nor to be so forgetful of resembling him, *who, having joy set before him, chose and endured the cross.* The world may wish joy on the ensuing festival; but to him only will it be a real season of happiness, who shall reduce to practice these salutary lessons.

Sermon VII.

New Year's Day.

ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

What is it that hath been?—the same thing that shall be.—Eccles. i. 9.

One, and perhaps not the least, advantage of those stated divisions, years, months, and seasons, into which man or nature has distributed time, is that they serve as monitors of its passage; they are, as it were, certain regular stages, at which, pausing mentally at least, in our irresistible career, we may exercise those powers of recollection and forecast with which we are gifted, and, looking at once backward on the past, and forward to the future, derive from both views, wisdom and improvement.

At one of these regular stages, my brethren, we have just arrived; we have just crossed the boundary that separates the past from the present year, and which, though unfelt and unperceived by us in our vital progress, will ever be real and conspicuous on the historic page, and form an eternal barrier between the actions and events of these two portions of existence. On such an occasion, then, my brethren, it is natural for us to indulge in a few reflections suggested by the two views to which I have alluded, the retrospect of the past, and the prospect of the future.

What, then, does the retrospect of the past year furnish? A variety of recollections, of which I will select some of the most interesting.

In the first place, the year itself is gone, for ever gone from us. It was once future, it is now past: it was once ours, it was once in our possession, it has now slipped for ever from our grasp. It has passed by us, and gone to take its place among the years of antiquity, and is now no more to us than they are.

It is gone, too, with all its opportunities and its offers, and its advantages. What we might once have done within its allotted duration, we can now no longer do; the good actions which we might have performed, the victories which we might have gained over ourselves, the virtues which we might have practised; all these advantages, if we have not secured them, are with respect to the elapsed year, now impossible: we may spend upon them a portion of our future existence, of that time which may possibly be ours; but of that which was ours, we cannot now dedicate to them the minutest portion.

And it is gone irretrievably; no force can bring it back, no entreaties, no repentance can recall it. We may be sorry for lost time, but we can never recover it; we may weep for it, we may redouble our diligence in future, but for the past there is no recovery; what is once lost is lost for ever. The wheel of time in its impetuous whirl cannot be made to recoil: the arm of Omnipotence even is unequal to the task. God may give us new time, but he cannot undo the past, nor cause that not to have been, which has already been. And when we consider the value of time, my brethren, that every moment of it is of eternal worth, since every moment may gain us an eternal crown, and then look back on the past year, and number up its amount in these invaluable moments;—what matter for reflection! what an abundant source of sighs and regrets!

With the year is past all that the year brought with it. Its pleasures are gone; and if they were criminal pleasures, the delights of sin, how sad is their retrospect, how bitter their recollection! For what fruit have you had, let me ask in the words of the Apostle, *what fruit have you had in those things of which you are now ashamed?* that momentary satisfaction which once beguiled you, and had power to sway your free-born spirit, where is it now? how much do you retain of it? And see the expense at which you purchased it! the loss of time, to say the least: the loss of virtue, which is much more easily forfeited than recovered, more easily wounded than healed: the loss of grace, since it is certain, that every faithful compliance entitles us to greater blessings, to something more valuable than all this world contains; the loss of a new degree of divine love, that great and sole end of our being; the loss, in fine, of inno-

cence, along with the sad uncertainty whether we have since recovered it.

Such, my brethren, are the wages of sin, such the fruits of guilty pleasures. Even if the past pleasures were indifferent or innocent, they are now on the same footing; they are gone. They attracted and flattered us in the prospect, and in the enjoyment they amused us for awhile; they perhaps smoothed down for us and beguiled a small portion of the rough path of life; but this is all that we can now say of them; and considering the nature of our present state, perhaps it were better for us *now*, that, instead of pleasures, they had been pains.

For the pains of the year are now also gone. All the little uneasiness we once felt, all the difficulties in the way of virtue, the struggles of our passions, the contradictions of our own will, the various restraints imposed on our appetites by duty or choice, all these are now over; the little painful impression which they for a moment left on the soul is past and long since forgotten; and our only sentiment now in their regard, our only wish, if we are wise, must evidently be that they had been more frequent and more trying. Had we suffered all the torments of the martyrs, or endured all the austerities of the anchorets, how much should we now feel of them? None of their pains, while their inestimable advantages would be ours for ever. What those advantages are I need not say to those who are acquainted with the signal difference which there is between the pleasures and the pains of this life; that, while the former are as a few transient and perishable fruits, the only end of which is to cheer and encourage the traveller on his rugged path, the latter are to the Christian the seeds of those immortal fruits on which he is to feed for ever. They pass off from his remembrance, frequently almost as soon as their immediate impression; but they are not lost; they are all treasured up with God, and will all faithfully reappear and be his best comfort and support on his awful entrance into another world.

Such, my brethren, are the reflections suggested by the retrospect of the past year; turning now to that which is before us, let us see what its prospect discloses.

The words of the text supply the answer: *What is it that hath been? the same thing that shall be.* Yes, the ensuing year,

like its predecessor, will be checkered with pleasures and pains; the very nature of our present existence makes this disposition quite inevitable. With respect to its pleasures, I will not now suppose that they can be henceforth of a criminal kind, trusting to the painful but salutary lessons of the past: but with respect to such as are innocent, I will observe, that it will be on the one hand your duty to trace them up to God as to their proper source, and to refer them to him as to their only end, to consecrate them by gratitude, and to sanctify them by purity of intention; and on the other, it will be your interest to approach them with caution and reserve, and strive to reduce them, as much as may be, within a narrow compass, remembering that this life is not a time of enjoyment, but of labor, and that one of the greatest requisites for its successful passage is a character of abstemiousness and forbearance.

With respect to the pains of the year, these will either be of your own choice, the voluntary hardships of penance, and in these the review of the past will, I trust, sufficiently show you your true interest; or they will be the pains imposed by the necessity of things, or rather by Divine Providence, such as sickness, loss of friends, accidents, disappointments, contradictions. These are unavoidable; the year, which should pass unmarked by any of them would be extraordinary indeed, and the individual to whose lot it should fall would be the most singular of men, and I might add not the most enviable. To bear them, therefore, or not to bear them, is not at our option; our only choice is to bear them well or ill. The latter, besides rendering them utterly fruitless and unprofitable, and even noxious, will only aggravate and imbitter them; it will only add sadness to sadness; the former—to bear them well, to bear them for God, to turn them to our spiritual profit, as we always abundantly can—will, on the contrary, ease and sweeten them, will almost neutralize their pain; and then in reversion will repay us with the richest fruits, both for this life and eternity. Can any thing more be necessary to determine the choice of a rational being?

Another feature, in which the past year once resembled the future, though now it cannot be said to do so, is what I will call its opportunities. Yes! in these the coming year abounds, it is

crowded with them; every moment of it may be of much gain to you, every action may be an eternal treasure, every trial an immortal crown. The career of perfection is open before you; here is no limit to your ambition. You are not forbidden, you are invited, you are impelled to aim and to aspire. Your talents are limited, your natural powers are fixed at a certain mark, and no efforts of your own can push them beyond; you may mature and cultivate, but you cannot increase them. But your sanctity is, I may say, within your own creation; you may carry it to what height you please, supposing only the grace of God, which in effect will never be wanting. God himself invites you, his graces are prepared for you, the sacraments are open to you; they were instituted for this purpose; the examples of the saints attract you; and the commencing year now meets you with all its rich and invaluable opportunities. Begin then, set your hand to the work, it is the noblest pursuit in which you can be engaged; it is the only ambition worthy an immortal soul.

But you must begin without delay, or rather you must be always beginning; you must seize and secure every passing opportunity. For the golden moments stay not; they hasten rapidly away, one after another, and run to take their place with those which have gone before them, and of which you already deplore the loss. And what is of peculiar importance to you, they are limited, and the term of their limitation is utterly unknown to you. This brings me to a concluding reflection.

There is one feature too interesting to be passed over, in which the past year differs from the future; that year has now a marked character: it may now be designated as fixed, defined, certain, known: the year to come is yet all obscurity and uncertainty. That uncertainty extends to every subordinate particular, your health, your fortune, your friends; but what is more interesting, it affects the principle of all, it touches the sum, life itself. Looking abroad into its dim vacuity, you are unable to say whether you shall reach its middle stage, or whether you are about to be arrested on its very threshold. How many will find a place in its ample obituary! to how many will one of its days be their last day! Will all, do you believe, that are here

assembled this day, live to see its next anniversary? Is no one now wanting who was here seated this day twelvemonth? And *what is it that hath been?—the same thing that shall be.* Oh! let this fearful uncertainty, which reaches every individual among us, and is so interesting and momentous to us all, be ever present to our minds, and stimulate all our exertions. In particular, let its remembrance attend us through the ensuing year, and teach us to husband well all its precious moments, solicitous only to fill it with good works, with sacrifices, and with merits. Thus, when the revolving year shall bring us round again to that marked point where we now stand, if it ever shall bring us, then we shall look back on the present year, not as we have done on so many before, with sighs, but with satisfaction; then we shall be able to pronounce it, not as so many of its predecessors, barren and empty, but well filled and fruitful, and in the true Christian sense, a happy year.

Sermon VIII.

Epiphany.

ON THE FESTIVAL.

Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to adore him.—MATT. ii. 2.

ADMIRABLE are the lessons which every event connected with the infancy of our Divine Redeemer unfolds. As the object of his coming was to raise the empire of grace on the ruins of infidelity and vice, it was just that his first conquests should be marked by peculiar splendor. Hence, in the call of the Wise Men, which we this day commemorate, and which was a prelude to the general vocation of all the nations of the earth, we see triumphantly displayed, the efficacy of those graces which he came to bestow. And, while the favors and illuminations of heaven bestowed on these first converts to Christ claim our admiring gratitude, the fidelity with which they corresponded to these graces forms an object worthy of our applause and imitation. Confining myself to these two reflections, I will dwell, for a few moments, first, on the goodness of God to the Magi and to ourselves; and, secondly, on the conduct of these Gentile princes, as the model of a true conversion.

One of the most dreadful punishments of sin, when it was first committed on earth, was the loss of that supernatural light with which man had been favored on his creation, by which he formed just notions of God, and became acquainted with his duties to him. On Adam's transgression, not only was this supernatural light withdrawn from him, but his rebellious passions, at the same time, threw a dense cloud over his natural reason, and man soon fell into the most absurd and pernicious

errors. Instead of worshipping the Creator, he bestowed on creatures the homage of his heart; and, instead of pursuing the means by which he could arrive at the eternal felicity for which he had been created, he gave himself up to abominations which must infallibly conduct him to eternal misery. It is true, that God never permitted this darkness of the understanding to become universal. By a special favor, merited by the retroactive efficacy of the Redeemer, whom he promised to our first parents, he still preserved the light of true faith in a few select individuals and their posterity. The descendants of Sem, and afterwards those of Abraham, were this select people, this chosen generation; and to them he revealed himself in a thousand supernatural ways, preserving among them, by these miraculous favors, the knowledge of his existence and of his particular protection. But this people, so highly distinguished, was but an insignificant fraction of the human race; and, while the small kingdom of Judea was illumined by a ray from heaven, the other regions of the earth were involved in the dark night of error and infidelity. In them Satan, the prince of darkness, reigned without control. In the multiplied divinities of pagan worship, he everywhere saw himself adored. But though God, in his inscrutable, but ever just, ever adorable judgments, thus left the vast majority of Adam's descendants, during many ages, to all the dire effects of original sin, yet he still had mercy in store for them; and, in his unsearchable designs, the race which had been so peculiarly favored was but the figure of a people to be afterwards adopted, and Abraham himself only the type of a personage who was truly to verify the appellation of the father of a multitude, by giving rise to a people infinitely more numerous, infinitely more favored, and chosen, not from one particular family, but from all the various nations of the earth. This personage was Jesus Christ, called for this reason, in the Holy Scripture, *the expectation of the Gentiles, the father of the future age.* Accordingly, he is no sooner born, than a celestial luminary appears to the Gentiles, the cheering signal of the happy lot that awaits them, the symbol of that divine light which they had forfeited by original sin, but which was now to be restored to them. The extraordinary star appears in the East; a region in which the tradition of a future Redeemer had been

more particularly preserved. The nations of the East, as we learn from history, were at this very time in the fullest expectation of the promised Redeemer. They, moreover, knew that he would spring from Judea, and that a star rising from that country would announce his arrival. When, therefore, on the day on which Christ was born, a new luminary appeared in the atmosphere, and in the direction of Judea, which, from all its circumstances, they understood to be no natural phenomenon, they at once concluded that the long expected Messiah had at length arrived. The extraordinary event instantly became a subject of the most anxious inquiry, and three individuals, urged by a powerful impulse of divine grace, commit themselves, in the name of the rest, to the guidance of the heavenly luminary, and are conducted, first to Jerusalem, and thence to the humble stable of Bethlehem, where they are admitted to behold their infant Redeemer. *And entering into the house*, says the Evangelist, *they found the child with Mary, his Mother, and, falling down, they adored him. And, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

Such, my brethren, is the first homage which a pagan world, after so many ages of infidelity, pays to the true God! Such the first-fruits of that abundant harvest, which is about to be reaped from every nation of the earth. But oh! who shall describe the nature and extent of the adoration which these first Gentile converts give to their Messiah! Supernaturally enlightened as they now were with regard to the quality of the infant before them, seeing in this state of annihilation the eternal Being of beings, in what an abyss of astonishment must their minds have been plunged!

How mean, how insignificant now appeared in their eyes every other object, compared with this infinitely great, infinitely sublime littleness! How ashamed did they now feel of their previous notions respecting the worldly pomp and splendor in which they had thought to have found him; and how evidently did they now see, that, however much these artificial ornaments may disguise the insignificance of a mere man, they could only degrade an incarnate God!

But, it was not to mere acts of acknowledgment of the great Jehovah, of the eternal Deity in the helpless infant that lay

before them, that the Magi this day confined their adorations. This, I may say, was only the homage of their understandings. Their hearts also adored him, by the most ardent acts of love and gratitude. The light of divine faith, opening more and more on their souls, discovered to them the cause, the nature, and the object of the great mystery of a God-man. Its cause they saw to be no other than the incomprehensible goodness of the Almighty; its nature the effect of his infinite power and wisdom; and its object the elevation of man to eternal glory, in place of the eternal misery which he had deserved by his crimes.

In this same light, they also saw the value of the blessing which God had bestowed on themselves in particular, in favoring them with a sight of the long-expected Redeemer, and in selecting them out of the whole Gentile world to be the first to receive salvation from him. Oh! how did all this knowlege, now suddenly bursting on them, affect and melt their hearts! To what raptures of love were they not elevated! With what tears of gratitude did they not flood the ground, on which they lay prostrate! And when, on the invitation of the holy virgin, they kissed the hands and feet of the divine Infant, and perhaps received him into their arms, who shall describe their feelings?

My brethren, the object which is this day proposed to our adoration is the same as that which engaged the homage of the Wise Men. The motives which we have to love and gratitude are not less powerful.

If we have divine faith, we must ever remember, that it is not less strictly a free gift of heaven in us than it was in the Magi: to them a miraculous star was sent to guide them to their Saviour, to us he has been manifested by the Apostles, still more glorious, more miraculous luminaries; and himself, the very sun of Justice, constantly shines forth to us, in his gospel and in his Church. This is a blessing denied to our forefathers, and still withheld from millions of our fellow-mortals, as deserving of it as ourselves. Yes! my brethren, God, as he promised, has gathered a people from all the nations of the world. The people is as strictly indebted to him for the free election which he has made of them above the rest, as were the carnal descendants of Abraham. We, as members of the Catholic

Church, have the happiness to belong to this people, and, as such, are inheritors of all the promises made to Christ, our great Abraham, our divine Progenitor. Heaven, the true land of promise, is our own, and God, after delivering us by baptism from the infernal Pharao, is leading us to this our country by the light of faith, prefigured by the pillar of fire and bright cloud with which he conducted the Israelites to the land of Canaan. He has wrought and daily works among us innumerable prodigies, to make us sensible of his presence and protection, and lavishes on us a thousand other favors, as much exceeding those bestowed on the carnal Abraham and his posterity, as the objects themselves exceed the representation, as much as the reality surpasses the figure.

To us then, compared with the rest of mankind, are truly applicable those words of the royal prophet: *He hath not done so to every nation, and his judgments he hath not manifested unto them.* In effect, my dear friends, however much we may ponder in our minds the special favors which God has bestowed on us, we shall never form an adequate notion of their magnitude and value; and though night and day we were incessantly employed in thanksgiving, we could never sufficiently acknowledge them. What then shall we say of those who perhaps never reflect on the benefit which they have received in receiving true faith, nor ever turn the eye of gratitude to him who is gratuitously favoring them with it? But, oh! what terms of execration shall we find for the numbers who in the present age undervalue the precious boon, expose it to danger, and heedlessly risk its loss; or who by the filth of their sins tarnish and utterly destroy its beauty? God, my brethren, is *just, and his judgments are right.* If he bestows on some particular favors, he requires from them a particular return. He expects that the Catholic should be as much distinguished from others by the purity of his morals as he is by the purity of his faith. If this should not be the case, let him who is conscious of guilt tremble at his situation. Let him shudder at the prospect of that multiplied damnation which a just God is about to pronounce upon him, when he shall summon all mankind before his dread tribunal, and at length lay open to us the beauty and harmony of his ways.

Then will be seen, in its true light, the value of the divine gift of faith with which he has been favored, the knowledge which it gave him of his Creator, and of his duties to him, and of the means by which it almost forced him to salvation.

Ah! what shall we say, when confronted with the myriads out of whom he was selected to be thus favored, whilst *they* were left in their original darkness? If *they* be justly doomed to eternal misery, what punishment may *he* not look for? May he not expect, that a hell will be created purposely for him, and that, having been hitherto the select object of God's favors, he will, in the new order of things, become the victim of his special vengeance?

That this may not be *our* unhappy case, my brethren, let us from this moment resolve to lead lives worthy of our vocation. The offerings made by the Wise Men to our new-born Saviour beautifully show us what these lives must be. They offered him their gold, as an acknowledgment that he was their King; thus showing us, that we must offer, and be ready on occasion to sacrifice our persons and property for his service, if we really believe that *to him the whole earth belongs, and the plenitude thereof.* All we possess, therefore, together with our thoughts, our words and actions, must be perpetually directed to his honor and glory; otherwise he is not our Lord and Master. The frankincense, which the Wise Men offered to Christ as to their God, was emblematic of the state of their own and of every just man's soul, in continual adoration of Jesus Christ, continually praising and glorifying him as the Sovereign Good, and continually ascending to him by fervent acts of desire, of gratitude, and of love. By the offering of myrrh, they not only acknowledged Christ's human nature, but expressed their readiness to participate in the sufferings which he was to undergo in it, and even, like him, to drink of the last bitter cup of death, if God should be pleased so to ordain. This also is essentially the disposition of every true Catholic; he shrinks not from the cross of Christ, but, on the contrary, turns with loathing from a life of ease and pleasure. He submits, with resignation and with joy, to privations, to pains, to mental affliction, to all those inconveniences and restraints which are inseparable from the practice of virtue, and thinks himself the

more favored, the more he is made to resemble his Saviour by sufferings.

But let us more minutely examine the conduct of these Gentile princes, and notice, first, the alacrity with which they followed the call of God; secondly, their steadiness and perseverance in overcoming obstacles; and, thirdly, the integrity and perfection of their sacrifice.

With regard to the first trait in their conversion, nothing can be conceived more prompt and implicit than their obedience to the first intimation of the will of Heaven. *We have seen*, do they say, *his star in the East, and are come to adore him.* Here are no excuses, no delays. Called by the voice of divine grace, and guided by a celestial light, they wait not to make superfluous inquiries as to the chances and probabilities of their undertaking. Engaged as they were by their profession in the pursuit of knowledge, who would not have thought, that, before they had committed themselves to the guidance of the celestial luminary, they would have stopped to examine the nature and qualities of so unusual a phenomenon? Human prudence would have dictated to them the necessity of deliberating and consulting, before they exposed themselves to the sneers and derisions of those around them, who probably regarded their undertaking as the extreme of folly and credulity. Others of obscurer rank might be sent to observe the course of the new luminary, and bring back intelligence of him whom it was destined to point out. Far, however, were any such considerations from influencing the minds of these first converts to Christ. Once persuaded in their conscience and informed of their duty by a secret illumination of divine grace, they make no inquiry, but, in the midst of an inclement season, leave their friends and country, undertake a long and perilous journey, and suddenly presenting themselves in a strange city, ask with impatience, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star, and are come to adore him.* How different from this the conduct of Herod and his subjects! Instead of hailing the intelligence with hosannas of joy, they answer indeed the inquiries of the Wise Men, by pointing out the place in which Christ is to be found, but go not themselves to seek him. Instead of following the celestial guide, they content themselves with curiously inquir-

ing the time of its appearance, and leave to strangers the care of discovering the Messiah. *Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, inquired of them diligently the time of the star's appearing to them; and sending them into Bethlehem, said, Go and search diligently after the Child, and when you have found him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore him.* Christians! while the conduct of these Gentile princes is a bitter reproach to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, does it not also rise up in judgment and condemn your indolence and tepidity in following the calls of Heaven? How often, when invited by the voice of divine grace to come and adore your Redeemer, to offer him the myrrh of repentance at the tribunal of penance, to present him your gold by succoring his indigent members, to give him the frankincense of prayer and supplication, do you suffer a less obstacle than a long and perilous journey to delay you in following his heavenly illuminations. Your conversion from sin to God is no less a miracle than that by which the Magi were conducted to Christ: nothing can render it secure but an instant compliance with the graces of God. Had the Wise Men neglected this first call, a second might never have been granted. Others as well as they had seen the star, and probably had intimation of its import, but by deferring to follow the call of Heaven, they were suffered to continue and perish in their infidelity.

The next trait in the conduct of the Wise Men which calls for your imitation, is their steadiness and resolution in overcoming the difficulties which they had to encounter in their way to Christ. Arriving at Jerusalem and at the court of Herod, they inquired concerning the birth of Christ, as of an event of public notoriety. Here they had naturally expected would be the end of their journeyings and toils; here they had expected to find every mouth employed in canticles of adoration and praise to the new-born Messiah. What, then, must have been their surprise and disappointment, when, instead of receiving the answer which they expected, they are scorned and ridiculed for their credulity; are told on all sides that no such event was known to have happened, and that, even had they not been deceived in the appearance of their celestial monitor, Bethlehem, and not Jerusalem, was the place to which it ought to have conducted them? To add to their perplexity, the star which had hitherto cheered and illumined

their steps entirely disappeared, and by its disappearance seemed to justify and confirm the predictions and railleries of those who derided their undertaking. The difficulties, my dear friends which the Wise Men encountered on this occasion are exactly such as Divine Providence permits the sinner to meet with when he begins to follow the light of divine grace. The world and its prince, ever jealous of his spiritual welfare, leave nothing, at that moment, unattempted to discourage him from persevering in the path in which he has begun to walk. Human prudence, the suggestions of his passions, the force of his evil habits, the dictates of flesh and blood, all urge him to discontinue his course. The light of Heaven itself seems also for a time to have abandoned him. The sentiments of horror and compunction which the sight of his miseries at first excited, are now hardly felt. He seeks for Christ, and is told that Christ cannot be born in the place where he is; that fresh efforts must be made, fresh difficulties encountered, before he can reach the perfection required for his spiritual birth. Happy, if under these trials he shall resolutely continue to sigh and seek for his Saviour. The Wise Men were no sooner informed by the priests of the birth-place of the Messiah, than they directed their steps to Bethlehem, and were again gladdened by the appearance of the star. Thus, however deserted and forlorn the repentant sinner may appear for a time; if he steadily and courageously follow the injunctions of those whom Providence has appointed to guide and instruct him, God, in his good time, will have pity upon him; the light of his countenance will again shine forth, and consolation, and serenity, and happiness will succeed.

The third and last circumstance which I pointed out in the conduct of the Wise Men, as an object of our admiration and imitation, was the perfection and integrity of their sacrifice. To men accustomed to these false notions of dignity and power to which the great and the rich are so much exposed, how revolting must have been the scene which the stable of Bethlehem presented! An infant weeping, helpless, and unprotected! A mother poor, houseless, and unbefriended! Oh! what a contradiction, what a shock to all their prejudices, ideas, and expectations! But did they hesitate? Oh no. *And falling down*, says the sacred text, *they adored him: and opening their trea-*

sures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Having once discovered the Son of God, they no longer consider themselves men of the world. Greatness, pride, prejudices, passions, all are cast aside, before the humility of the infant Saviour. *And falling down they adored him.* Yes! and not content with adoring him, they made him a sacrifice of their worldly riches and possessions, of the objects and instruments of their past softness and sensual gratifications. *And opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.*

Thus the true convert, having once had the happiness to discover Christ, no longer keeps any measures with those things which he has abandoned. He sacrifices his pride, his own feelings, his criminal habits, the occasions of his sins. He knows no reserve. In embracing Christ he embraces his humility, his meekness, his patience, his cross, his love of the Father, his contempt of the world. Such are the marks of a true conversion. But, alas! in how few do we find them. Instead of that entire and total sacrifice which alone can be agreeable to Christ, do not the far greater part of penitents content themselves with a few vain and ineffectual resolutions, which serve rather to silence conscience than to change the heart? Do they not seem to wish to make a division of their affections between God and the world, granting to God an apparent and external homage, but impiously refusing to abandon for him those objects and those occasions, an attachment to which they know to be incompatible with a true conversion? Sinners, if you wish that your conversion to God be true and acceptable, like that of the Wise Men, be prompt and urgent in commencing it; be resolute and persevering in carrying it on, and let it be marked by a total sacrifice of your heart and its attachments. Then, and then only, shall you deserve to receive the guidance and illuminations of Heaven through the difficult and perilous journey of life, and to be conducted, by a way different from that in which you have hitherto walked, to your own true country, the region of eternal light and happiness.

Sermon XX.

The First Sunday after Epiphany.

ON VENIAL SIN.

Be not conformed to this world; but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God.—Rom. xii. 2.

It is one of the most frequent occasions of man's perdition, that he regulates his life by the maxims and example of the world in which he lives, and of the persons with whom he converses, rather than by the rules of right reason and religion. Example acts with so powerful an impulse on his mind that it is with difficulty he can persuade himself, or, if persuaded, can act on the conviction that the draught is noxious which so many imbibe, or that the path which so many are following will lead to destruction. To counteract this evil influence of worldly example, the word of God, in innumerable passages, cautions us against it in the most pointed terms, again and again declaring that the judgment of God is different from the judgment of men; and that the way in which the world, that is, the generality of mankind walk, is broad indeed and spacious, but leading to death.

Hence it follows, that the life of a Christian ought to be a perpetual condemnation of the world; every step which he takes ought to be in opposition to its ways; everywhere ought he to be suspicious of its judgments, and everywhere ought he to be in dread of its allurements and the force of its example. On no subject, however, is this rule more necessary than on the subject of venial sin. By the world venial sin is an evil but little apprehended. A life of tepidity, a life of self-indulgence

and self-love, a life which is consumed in endeavoring to reconcile to conscience the unrestrained enjoyment of honors, riches, and pleasures, the indulgence of vanity, of sloth, of avarice, of detraction, a life, in fine, spent in inquiring how far the law of God may be infringed without incurring the last anathema of heaven, is a life in which the world sees no great harm, is a life which many even among true believers consider to be compatible with salvation, and in which they persevere with placid security. To undeceive you with regard to so fatal and common an error, is the object which I have in view in calling your attention this day to the important subject of venial sin. Important indeed it is, inasmuch as, after mortal sin, venial sin is the greatest of all possible evils. This point shall form the first subject for our consideration; the second shall be the calamitous consequences by which venial sin is attended.

Next to a mortal offence against God, venial sin is undoubtedly the greatest of all possible evils. To appreciate this important truth, fellow-Christians, which all admit, but with which so very few are duly impressed, it may be of importance to reflect maturely on the nature and consequences of the acknowledgment which we so lightly make; to consider in detail some of the evils which we so readily admit to be inferior to the evil of venial sin; and to compare with them some one of those innumerable daily falls which we have been in the habit of believing not to include a mortal guilt.

With this view, let us first place before our eyes an individual such as holy Job, cast down from a state of opulence, overwhelmed by every species of calamity, and deprived of every resource, ruined in his fortune, his family, his health, his friends, his reputation, his peace; could all this have been prevented by a single venial sin, that venial sin were an evil too great to purchase the exemption. Rising, then, in the scale of evils, let us suppose that the calamities thus accumulated on a single head were extended through the whole of an illustrious family, that a long line of descendants had been reduced to slavery, and that successive generations were for ages to pine away under every species of oppression: great as such evils might be deemed, they are still unequal to the evil of a single venial sin. Advancing still farther, let us next suppose that

the calamities alluded to extended through a whole kingdom, that a victorious enemy was to deluge it with the blood of its inhabitants, that war, pestilence, and famine were to conspire in thinning its once populous cities, and that the wretched remnant of its population should be swept away for ever into barbarous captivity; the whole accumulated amount of the evils thus undergone would be insufficient to balance the evils of one venial sin. Next let us place before our imagination all the evils which have happened since the fall of man, the wars, the calamities, of which we have read in sacred or profane history, earthquakes, inundations, plagues, massacres, revolutions, in a word, let all sublunary woes be cast into one vast account, the mighty accumulations of evil totally disappear when compared with that of one venial sin.

This is an undoubted truth, an article of your faith, an assertion which you cannot deny, without renouncing the religion which you profess. And all this, my brethren, you admit when you acknowledge that, next to a mortal offence against God, venial sin is the greatest of all evils. In other words, you admit that any one of those venial sins, to which you have so often calmly and deliberately consented, which perhaps on account of its frequency is, in the examination of your conscience, scarcely recalled to recollection, and for which your only atonement has been but a passing act of sorrow, was to you a greater calamity than the loss of fortune, of friends, of character, of life; a greater evil than the destruction of an empire, of the whole world, of the whole human race.

To proceed still farther with this important and truly awful reflection, let us make the supposition that you had been the innocent occasion of bringing on a fellow-creature any of those calamities which I have just described; that you had, by some accident, which you could neither prevent nor foresee, occasioned the loss of the fortunes, of the happiness, of the lives of multitudes of your fellow-beings; where is the heart that would not bleed as often as the accident itself or the evils arising from it were called to remembrance? And yet, though venial sin is known, is believed, is acknowledged to be an infinitely greater evil, you can behold it with indifference. Behold it! consent to it, without a struggle! perpetrate it without remorse! You

have brought on yourself a calamity greater than any which it is possible for man to inflict, and you are unmoved and insensible.

The evil, I hear it said, may be committed, it is only a venial sin. Impious and deluded man! The wisdom of the God of heaven declares the deed to be forbidden. He, whose will the highest seraph obeys with trembling, has prohibited its commission; yet, because he does not visit thy transgression with the full weight of his indignation, in spite of his commands, in contempt of his goodness, thou shalt calmly rush to its perpetration! It is only a venial sin! and yet the destruction of the whole world, with all its inhabitants, were an evil of less magnitude. Only a venial sin! and yet the very flames of the bottomless abyss, in the expiatory prison of the other world, are borrowed for its punishment. And who is this God, whose least and easiest precepts thou disregardest and contemnest? It is the Being from whom thou hast received all that thou hast, even to thy existence: he, from whom flows every blessing, every good. Go, then, and with presumptuous confidence petition for his favors. Say to him, though it be ever with reluctance that thou pronouncest thy maledictions, and though it be by the tender invitations of love, by the generous motives of gratitude, that thou invitest me to serve thee, I will be restrained from offending thee by nothing but the thunder of thy indignation. Thy will shall be done by me no farther than where my opposition to it will not be visited by eternal torments. Though the evil which I commit be great, though it be greater than all temporal evils, though the praises and canticles of love chanted for eternity by the angelic choirs, be insufficient to make amends for the indignity which I am going to offer thee, I will perpetrate the deed. Such language of insanity and wickedness, I know, my brethren, is not formally and deliberately held; yet is it not the language equivalently made use of by every Christian who palliates, excuses, and permits to himself a thousand misdeeds of daily and hourly occurrence, under the plea that they are only venial sins? Ah! my brethren, how different is our conduct with regard to those of our fellow-creatures whom fortune has made our superiors on earth. Where, let me ask, is the servant who would thus act towards an earthly master? who

would disregard all his commands, all his prohibitions, provided they were not accompanied with a threat of expulsion from his service? Where is the master that would tolerate so systematic a depravity in any of those who serve him?

But venial sin, it may be alleged, when compared with mortal sin, is, after all, an evil of diminished magnitude. My brethren, the more easy the precept which we contemn, and the less the gratification which solicits us, the more inexcusable is our disobedience. Our lives, that is the lives of the greater part of mankind, pass away in ordinary occupations, the common duties of society. The more violent passions are not always in a state of excitement, nor are we always under the more grievous assaults of temptation. But if while the enemy is yet weak and at a distance, we yield to his every solicitation, can it be presumed, we are in the disposition of boldly and courageously withstanding his assaults, when with his whole force he endeavors to move and subdue us? Ah, Christians, could we read the secrets of the bottomless abyss, could we interrogate its unhappy inmates, we should find a large majority of these wretched sufferers dating their perdition from a reckless indifference with regard to the commission of venial sin; we should find them lamenting over it, as over the first and greatest of their misfortunes. And why so? Because it was by habits of venial sin, it was by living in a disregard of the common and minor duties of life, that they first occasioned the withholding of that support, of those efficacious graces from God, by the help of which they would have stood firm under occasions of severer trial: whereas, for want of such support, their feeble virtue gave way, and they were precipitated into the horrid abyss of mortal sin. Such, then, my brethren, is the worst feature in venial sin, it conducts to mortal sin, and usually to final impenitence. To this important point we will next direct our attention.

It is an axiom that no one arrives on a sudden at the extreme of depravity. If we retrace the life of the most abandoned profligate, we shall find that there was a time when he would have shuddered at the excesses into which he now plunges without remorse. His first deviations from rectitude were slight and inconsiderable; he quitted, it is true, the straight line of duty; but with no intention of deserting it totally and for ever. As

he has advanced onwards, a return to the way which he had left, that at first seemed easy, has gradually become more difficult; and he now finds that he possesses neither strength nor courage to retrace his steps, or traverse the vast space by which he is separated from the distant track. A knowledge of this truth, so generally admitted, drew from St. Chrysostom that remarkable assertion, that it is sometimes of greater consequence to avoid the less than to avoid the more grievous offences. *I dare to advance a proposition*, says that great saint and doctor of the church, *which will doubtless appear novel and surprising. It is, that to me it sometimes seems an object of less concern to avoid the more grievous than to shun the less heinous sins.* The enemy of mankind knows that the fall of that virtue is the most sure and irreparable, which has been weakened and undermined by slow and imperceptible degrees. He well knows that the soul which has an habitual horror of venial sin, either will not be seduced into a mortal transgression, or, even if it could be overcome, that it would instantly rise more resolute and vigilant from the disaster. Hence, it is in venial sin that his assaults are most to be feared; because it is in venial sin that they are the most frequent and successful. The evil here gains admission almost without being perceived. A slow poison is communicated to the soul, which, though it does not actually destroy, yet renders it so diseased and corrupted as to place its cure beyond the power of ordinary remedies. To speak more plainly, in the soul that is enslaved to venial sin, charity, that animating principle of the fervent Christian, is weakened; all its ardors are extinguished, all its operations are restrained. In that soul the judgments of God, eternity and its awful truths, no longer possess the power of exciting that salutary fear which to the tepid is so indispensable both as a safeguard and as a stimulus. In that soul, all relish for prayer and spiritual things is deadened and destroyed. To it every duty becomes burdensome, every act of religion irksome. As God and his love are excluded, the world and its trifles enter and occupy their place. In the mean time, the passions acquire new strength by every fresh concession, the understanding becomes blind, and the heart corrupt; while a general torpor and insensibility to all that is good binds down and paralyzes the whole man. Thus helpless, thus diseased,

the hour of temptation comes upon him, when, without a struggle and without a shock, he falls into the death of mortal sin, from which there is every reason to fear he will never revive. Such, my brethren, is the fatal consequence of indulging in the habit of venial sin—a mortal fall followed by final impenitence here, and by hell hereafter.

For indeed to a man in the state which I have been describing, what hope can we extend of returning to grace, should he ever fall from it by a mortal transgression? To him sin seems to have lost its deformity. It bears no longer that hideous and disgusting aspect in which it ever appears to the fervent soul. Accustomed to think lightly of its commission, and to calm his conscience under it by a thousand vain palliations, he is still insensible to its malice, even though it has induced a mortal guilt. God, who is master of his own gifts, is by no means bound to perform in his favor that miracle of grace by which only he can be restored to the dignity from which he has fallen. All his admonitions, all his calls have been neglected and despised. His menaces and his invitations have been equally set at naught, and it is at length time that the predictions of divine wisdom should begin to be accomplished. *Because I called and you refused to hear, I stretched out my hand and there was none that regarded, you have despised all my counsel and neglected my reprehensions, I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock when that which you feared shall come to you. When sudden calamity shall fall on you, and destruction as a tempest shall be at hand, when tribulation and distress shall come upon you; then shall they call upon me and I will not hear; they shall rise in the morning and shall not find me. Because they have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord; nor consented to my counsel, but despised all my reproof; therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices.*

From these fatal consequences which attend venial sin, what shall we infer? A truth, my brethren, awful indeed, but not on that account the less certain. It is, that to the man who indulges in habits of venial sin, there is no security; but that every neglect of duty, every new transgression to which he consents, may be the commencement of his reprobation. Certain

it is, that no one can stand firm in the hour of trial, unless strengthened and supported by divine grace. Certain it is, that God at length withholds the peculiar efficacious succors of his grace, when, by repeated acts of infidelity, he has been long disregarded and contemned. I am not ignorant, indeed, that there is an immense, nay an infinite distance between mortal and venial sin. I am not ignorant that the guilt of the latter, however frequently repeated, can never amount to that of one mortal transgression; but I also know that though venial sin is not of itself punished by eternal torments, yet, by inducing mortal sin, it also, when voluntarily and deliberately committed, usually terminates in hell. The history of man's depravity, the nature of his passions gaining strength by indulgence, the ways of Providence in the distribution of his graces, the wily arts of the tempter, all conspire to bear out the assertion, and the word of God expressly confirms it. *He that neglects small things shall fall by little and little:* and, *he that is unjust in that which is little is unjust also in that which is greater.*

But who, it may be urged, is so perfect as to avoid sometimes falling into venial sin? *The just man falls seven times;* and St. John declares, *that, if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* Such a plea, I acknowledge, were it adduced by the fervent soul, by him who has a true zeal for salvation, might be allowed its due weight; in the mouth of the tepid Christian, to what does it amount? You are, you say, subject to human frailty; and is it then, a mere defect arising from human frailty, that, while you heedlessly indulge in a thousand venial failings, you make no effort, have no desire to correct them? Is mere human frailty to be blamed for that indolence, that inactivity, that torpor, with regard to the great affair of your salvation? Is it through mere human frailty, that, while the world takes up your thoughts, while vanity, ambition, temporal interest, curiosity, occupies the day, the great affair of advancing in perfection is left to a few moments, to a few customary prayers, recited without fervor and without attention? Is it mere human frailty, that those very sacrifices, which you so readily make to the world and to vanity, should uniformly be shrunk back from, when demanded for the sake of God, when imposed by charity or religion? . . .

But are you sure, that this habitual indifference with regard to the commission of venial sin, is not itself already a mortal sin? What shall we say? The first and greatest of all God's commandments is, that you love him above all things, and with your whole heart. And can you flatter yourself that you love God above all things, and with your whole heart, while you make light of his least and easiest precepts, prefer your convenience, your ease, your temporal interest, your pleasures, before his will, and obey him no farther than where he thunders upon disobedience the last dreadful anathema of his wrath? Oh, my brethren, the God whom we thus unconcernedly offend, has again and again declared, that his judgments are far other than the judgments of men; that *the children of men are liars in their balances*, and *that there is a way which appeareth right to a man, but that the end thereof leadeth to death.* Let not then the Christian who makes light of venial sin flatter himself with a belief that venial sin is the whole amount of his guilt. It is at once the consequence and punishment of his repeated infidelities, that he should fall into a spiritual blindness, a darkness of understanding, which prevents him from knowing the extent of the evil under which he is held. A mortal gangrene has probably already consumed the vitals of his soul; and, though just sinking into a miserable eternity, he still persuades himself that his disease is not unto death. In such a situation, where shall we look for a gleam of hope? Does he have recourse to his spiritual physician? Yet, either he does not expose to him his wounds, or, for want of the necessary dispositions, he renders the balm which is infused, inefficacious and useless. Does he approach the sacred table? Yet that bread of life rather augments than allays his distemper. He returns from it more secure in his guilt, more insensible to his danger.

Such then, my brethren, being the nature, such the fatal consequences attendant on the habitual commission of venial sin, it is evident, that a zeal for your own vital interests should make you ever watchful against this enormous, this insidious and dangerous evil. You have seen its enormity, you have seen, that, except mortal sin, it is not for any one of the evils of time or eternity, nor for any number of them, nor even for the

accumulation of them all, to compare with the evil of one venial sin. You have seen the insult which it offers to the majesty, to the goodness of God. You have seen it the commencement of the reprobation of the damned, the subject of their bitterest lamentations in the midst of their torments. You have seen its insidiousness and its danger; that its first advances are slow and imperceptible, but that, no sooner does it gain admission, than it beats down and destroys all the defences, all the supports of virtue; that it is the forerunner of mortal sin, the harbinger of final impenitence; that it has the fatal power of corrupting the heart, and of blinding the understanding; and that the torpor which it induces so nearly resembles the sleep of death, that the latter is often mistaken for the former.

To these considerations, my dear friends, I will only add, that the way to heaven is not broader or more commodious to us than it was to those who have already arrived at that happy abode. By them, the good and faithful servants of their Lord, venial sin was never deemed a slight evil. By them no care was thought superfluous for avoiding it, no austerity, no rigor too great for its punishment. And shall we say that their notions were erroneous, the views which they took of their duty incorrect? Ah, Christians! if they entertained such a dread of offending God, if they were so attentive and eager to please him in all things, it was because they acted up to the principles which they professed, it was because they had an exalted and a just idea of the sanctity to which a Christian is bound to aspire. If they so studiously avoided venial sin, it was because they well knew that a slight ailment is often the cause of a mortal disease, and that the consumption which slowly and imperceptibly wastes the frame, is in the end more inevitably fatal than the fever which seems to threaten it with immediate dissolution. As for you, my friends, generously follow their truly wise example. Listen no longer on so momentous a point to the soothing maxims of a deluding and deluded world. Think nothing little which is an offence against God; nothing to be despised which may conduct to perdition. If you would be victorious over your spiritual enemies, diligently guard against their first approaches. It is then only you can combat to advantage when your enemy has not as yet gained admission. Should he once be permitted to

enter, it will be difficult to resist, and still more difficult to expel him. Let a Christian vigilance preside over all your performances. Remember that every action of your life, every word which you utter, every thought which you conceive, is instantly registered in the book of heaven: that the day is not far distant when it will be again produced, either for the increase of your reward or the augmentation of your eternal misery; and that it is only by a fidelity in your minor duties that you can hope to hear on that day the cheering sentence of approbation, *Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things.*

Sermon X.

The Second Sunday after Epiphany.

ON THE HOLY NAME.

And after eight days were accomplished that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.—Luke ii. 21.

A short time ago, the Church invited you to contemplate the scene exhibited at the birth of a Man-God. *Let us go over to Bethlehem*, she exclaimed with the shepherds, *and let us see this word which is come to pass.* There, what an accumulation of wonders was presented to your view! What an astonishing alliance of greatness and abjection! The glory of heaven become the outcast of earth, angelic choirs in congratulation and triumph, the offspring of an obscure maid in misery and tears! The Lord of all things destitute of all! An humble artisan, and a few poor shepherds, the first attendants of the King of heaven! his royal robes the swaddling bands of infancy! his palace the stable! his throne the manger!

Soon after, still pointing to this sacred object of her love in the arms of his Virgin Mother, the Church offered you fresh subjects of astonishment and admiration. She bade you behold him, the Holy One by excellence, in the character of a sinner, and undergoing a punishment proper only to guilt. The painful rite of circumcision was instituted solely for the sinful offspring of man; it is now undergone by the immaculate Son of the Most High. At the same time is given to him that holy and adorable name which we this day venerate. Heaven, in revealing the name of the new-born infant, has revealed the character which he is to bear through life; has unfolded the

object for which he is come; explained and justified all the circumstances of ignominy in which we behold him appearing among us. *And after eight days his name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel, before he was conceived in the womb.* Yes! my brethren, in the name of Jesus, by which is meant a Saviour, in the holy, the expressive, the adorable name of Jesus, we have the development of all the astonishing mysteries which we have been contemplating, and of all that we are to contemplate in the details of the history of this Man-God. If he is born in poverty, nurtured in want and affliction, presented this day like a sinner to the knife of circumcision, it is because he is our Jesus, because he is our Saviour. If, in his after-life, he is rejected, hated, and persecuted, it is still because he is our Jesus, because he is our Saviour. If he is apprehended, falsely accused, cruelly tormented, ignominiously put to death, the name which he this day assumes explains the mystery, accounts for all the atrocities which he endures. In taking it upon him, he embraces by anticipation, and engages to endure them all. His life and his death, his joys and his sorrows, his glory and his ignominy, are all only the fulfilment of this emphatic name.

The name of Jesus, says St. Bernard, was not in him merely the shadow of a great name, but the truth. It was a name which belonged to him by excellence; a name to which he was justly and pre-eminently entitled. It emanated from heaven. Infinite wisdom invented and bestowed it, and it cannot therefore fail to convey the fullest and most expressive idea of him whom it is intended to characterize.

The name, *I am who am*, by which the Almighty commanded Moses to designate him to the children of Israel, conveying a most sublime idea of that self-existence which distinguishes him from all other beings, was sublime and distinctive: yet, would we behold him surrounded by beauty rather than by power; would we know him in the most lovely of all his works; the most cherished of all his attributes; would we behold him in relation to ourselves; would we know him as the dearest of friends, the most tender of parents, the most liberal of benefactors; would we know him, in fine, as our solace in affliction, our refuge in distress, our guide in life, our support in death,

our hope on earth, our reward in heaven; we must learn his name from the angel, *and you shall call his name Jesus.*

This sacred name, while it is to an incarnate God a title to suffering and to death, is to us a title to happiness and life. It is the passport to our true country, a pledge of our restoration to the dignity of which sin had deprived us. Suspended on the cross, it annuls the handwriting that was against us, and authorizes us to hope for every grace and every benediction from heaven. There is no other name given to men, whereby they may be saved. Pronounced with fervor by the humble Christian, it pierces to the very throne of the Father: it pleads before him with resistless force, it presents to him all the labors, all the sufferings, all the merits of his Son; it offers a holy violence to heaven, and cannot fail of obtaining the favor for which it pleads, conformably to the promise of him who bore it: *Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it to you.* This sacred Name, my brethren, is not only a sovereign antidote for all the evils which sin has introduced; it is also the most powerful help, the strongest incentive, to admire and imitate the example of him whom it denotes. When Jesus sounds in my ear, says St. Bernard, all good things present themselves to my mind. I take example from him as man, I am aided by him as God. In this Name we behold the most urgent of the titles which he has to our love, the strongest claims to our gratitude, the most powerful motive to our hope. Hence, in pronouncing it with fervor, we make acts of all the most exalted virtues. By invoking Jesus, we declare our faith in his redemption, our hope in his merits, our love and gratitude for his benefits.

This sacred Name is styled, by the Apostle, a Name above all names. It is a Name of salvation to men, of astonishment to heaven, of terror to hell. Yes! great and sublime as are the celestial spirits, enlightened as are their ideas with regard to the divine attributes and perfections, they behold in this new name and character which the Son of God assumes, an abyss of love, an exertion of omnipotence, to which their most exalted conceptions could never have reached. The wonders of the creation, the magnificent display of the vast universe all dwindles to insignificance in comparison with the import of the sacred Name assumed this day by their Lord and God.

When, before the existence of this terraqueous globe, they beheld him standing and by a single word causing all nature to spring into existence, the spectacle which they witnessed was magnificent and striking; yet, when they hear it revealed by the archangel to Mary, that the child which she is to bear is the Son of the Most High, and that his name shall be called Jesus, they stand utterly lost in astonishment; instantly did the sacred name resound in all their canticles, instantly was it re-echoed from rank to rank, through all their lengthened hierarchies; some breathing it in the seraphic strains of love, others loudly repeating it in songs of exultation and triumph, all in raptures of congratulation and praise.

No sooner was that sacred Name pronounced by the archangel on earth, than, from the highest pinnacle of heaven, it reverberated through the lowest caverns of the infernal abyss. There to the foe of God and man it was a sound of terror and dismay. By the potent efficacy of the name assumed by the Son of God, the angel of darkness saw all his malice defeated, his power restrained, his empire dissolved, his lost seat filled up. The time was come when his proud head, which had madly aspired to an equality with the Most High, was to be crushed by the seed of the woman; and not only this, but he was henceforward to behold those whom he had hitherto held captive, the weak, unstable children of mortality, triumphing over all his efforts, baffling the utmost exertions of his malice by the single aid of this Omnipotent Name.

And, in effect, my brethren, would you be possessed of a secure shield against the darts of your spiritual adversary, would you triumph over his efforts, repel his suggestions, dissipate his illusions; arm yourself with the sacred name of Jesus. All the phantoms of hell shall flee, all the powers of the most wicked one be dissolved at the sound.

By the resistless virtue of this conquering Name it was that the Apostles suspended at pleasure the laws of nature, chained the arm of death, undid the power of hell. By this they cured the sick, dispossessed demoniacs, gave sight to the blind. By this the primitive Christians triumphed over all their pagan adversaries, dissolved the spells of their magicians, struck dumb the oracles of their gods. By this the martyrs vanquished the

utmost fury of their persecutors, answered their taunts, endured unmoved their most excruciating torments. This it was, which gave to the confessors consolation in exile, comfort and joy in their dungeons and chains. This it was, which cheered the anchoret in the horrors of the wilderness, encouraged and supported him under all his privations and austerities. In this name, in every age and clime, have the saints of God found support under all their trials, the compensation of every worldly loss: this was their encouragement to the contest, their strength in battle, their reward in victory.

With these noble champions, with every fervent disciple of Christ, let it be your ambition, my brethren, to love and venerate this adorable Name. Let the holy name of Jesus be ever pronounced by you with confidence and love. Let it be your refuge in temptation, your solace in afflictions, your guide in perils, your support in despondency; let the holy name of Jesus be ever in your heart and on your lips. In the morning let it be the first word which you utter; at night, let it be the last accent on your tongue.

O Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! be thou a Jesus to me. O Jesus! name of greatness and of power, name of mercy and of love. May the potent efficacy of that name put to flight the enemies of my soul; may its sweetness penetrate and melt my heart; may it ever be imprinted on my imagination and engraven on my memory. May I find it in health my sweetest occupation to pronounce it, in sickness my best consolation to invoke it, and in death may Jesus be the last word which my lips shall utter. And having been devout to this holy name on earth, may we all come to love and praise it for ever in heaven.

Sermon XX.

The Third Sunday after Epiphany.

ETERNAL SEPARATION.

And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.—MATT. viii. 11, 12.

THERE prevails in the world, and even among too many of the children of the Church, a strange and unhappy prejudice against the more awful and terrific truths of religion. They are thought to be too strong; they are shunned as too fearful; the very names of death, judgment, and hell, to the false delicacy of the age, have a harsh and uncouth sound, and are barely tolerated from the chair of truth itself. Some would even pretend to argue against their frequent inculcation; and, as if they knew better the nature and the wants of man than he who made him, would have us deal more in pleasing topics, act more on what they would call man's generous principles, and rather allure by attractions than stimulate by terrors. Nothing, I say, can be more unfortunate than such a prejudice: however, let it be for once in some degree humored. I on the present occasion, at least, shall not speak or act against it. I am about to treat neither of judgment nor of hell; I am neither going to detail the terrors of the former, nor to paint the horrors of the latter, neither its flames nor its dungeons nor its demons. Out of the mass of formidable matter collected in my text, I will select only one word, one single idea, to which I will confine myself, hoping to be able to draw from it sufficient matter for

your instruction and edification. That word, my brethren, that idea is *Separation*. It is one which comes home to every mind and breast; it is one connected with our best feelings; it is one in which few can be entirely inexperienced, and none surely can find an objection. It has been remarked, that we part with difficulty even from inanimate nature, after long connection; and that even to an enemy, when we come finally to separate, we cannot utter the parting adieu, without a secret sentiment of regret and sadness. Let us see, then, whether from this feeling principle in our nature, we cannot draw some religious improvement, without for the present dwelling on any thing more terrible. *Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* The same idea is more fully developed in the 25th chapter of the same Evangelist, where we read that *all the nations of the earth shall be gathered together before the Son of Man, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting.* This separation, my brethren, of which I am about to speak, will be instantaneous, and of course only one in time, yet in effect it will be threefold: it will comprise at least three distinct separations, on each of which therefore in succession I propose to dwell.

The first and the most obvious will be what I will call the *General Separation*, the great separation of mankind. The immense assembly standing before him, the mandate of the Great Judge will instantly strike them off into two grand divisions. Under one or other will and must be classed all the sons of Adam, and of course among the rest, we who are here present. On which side, then, my brethren, shall we fall, to the right or to the left? It is a question of immense interest to us, but as yet of impenetrable obscurity. Heaven grant that the former may be our common lot! It is a point infinitely to be desired; but, alas! it is more to be desired than expected; for you know already, by the clearest lights of faith, where the majority, the

immense majority, will stand. At any rate, in order to enter with effect into the subject, and receive that impression of sacred fear, which these subjects are calculated and intended to convey, you must for the present take the disadvantageous side; you must imagine yourselves among the unhappy number; in one word, you must conceive yourselves under the sentence and in the act of separation. This is the only way to form a just apprehension of the subject. And why should you shrink from such an exercise of the power of imagination? For what else was this power given you? You have it at command, you use it freely and with delight in the pursuit of pleasure, too often, perhaps, of guilty pleasure; and shall imagination, then, only lie by you useless, in enabling you to conceive and feel more forcibly the vital interests of your eternal welfare? I will request you, then, while I keep before you the subject of this last separation, to apply it to yourselves, and to suffer all its important consequences to fall in imagination upon you. It cannot approximate, and may avert them. The stroke of separation, then, dealt out from an almighty arm, will instantly take effect, and the two vast but unequal companies, receding from each other, will retire to their several destinies; the reprobate beginning their precipitate fall down that deep gulf of perdition from which they are never to rise, and the just ascending upwards to those seats of bliss on which they are to be enthroned for ever.

And oh! my brethren, what think you will be your sentiments, when in your fall you shall lift up your eyes, and be witnesses of all their triumph! What a moment, what a terrible moment will that be to you, when the last glimpse of their receding glory shall fade on your eye, and the last echo of their rejoicings shall expire on your ear.

It will be loaded with every idea that can aggravate and embitter. 1. The contrast of your two destinies. Theirs is the aggregate of every good, exquisite joys, ineffable delights, consummate happiness:—yours is the collection of all evil, insupportable pains, excruciating torments, accumulated and perfect wo: supreme beatitude, and supreme misery, two vast extremes, which yet will reach and act on each other; yours will enhance theirs, theirs will aggravate yours. Overwhelmed by your own

sentence, you will be crushed in addition by theirs, and the weight of both will precipitate you in your fall. 2. The cause of this opposition in your destinies—yourselves; the fault entirely your own. You freely chose it; extreme and terrible as this destiny is, you freely and deliberately chose it. By a rapid glance of the mind, you will then see, and to your clearest conviction see, that you might with ease have avoided it; that the time was when a prayer, a tear, a sigh might have saved you, and turned the scales of your destiny, and you would not. You deliberately, therefore, and with your eyes open, worked out your own fate; it is the labor of your own hands, and you cannot complain. Could you possibly look around you, and discover person or thing on whose agency you might shift but a part of the accumulated load, it would be some alleviation: but at this dreadful moment you have no such resource; with all its undivided weight, it recoils singly on your own head, and consigns you to all the agonies of concentrated despair. 3. The fixedness, the unchangeableness of your destiny; it is without the hope, without the chance, without the possibility of a change. It will no more be possible for you to rise again out of the abyss into which you are plunged, than for the blessed to fall from the immortal seats to which they are raised; nay, than for God himself to descend from his all-essential throne. Oh! this is the cruel circumstance; this is the blasting idea.

This exclusion of all hope, this barring-up of all prospect, is all but death to the soul. Never is there, from this moment, to take place any communication between these two opposite conditions; they are divorced for ever. *A vast chaos*, as the Scripture expresses it, interposes, never to be passed; Omnipotence alone can remove the barrier, and Omnipotence has sworn that he never will. Such, my brethren, is what I have called the general separation, and such its weight and import.

But while it comprehends, it will not swallow up, it will still leave room and effect for another, which I may be allowed to denominate the *Particular Separation*. For will there not be among the general mass, some particular object in your regard? Will there not be among the crowd, some particular persons whose separation will affect you? Undoubtedly there will:—your friends and relatives! These constitute, among all ranks,

one of the greatest endearments of life; they are at once its highest and most genuine relish. There is no one that does not feel and estimate them: the least fortunate of mankind still finds in the bosom of a family his last refuge, his last look of comfort in a brother, a parent, a child, or a spouse. Their society delights us; their attentions relieve us; their affection charms us; their congratulation enhances our joys, and their condolence soothes our sorrows. But will all this follow us into the next world? will these tender connections hold in eternity? It is a melancholy but certain truth, that they will not. Cain and Abel were the first of human brothers; are they brothers in salvation? Again, Jacob and Esau; of whom God himself says, *Jacob I have loved, and Esau I have hated.* And does not our divine Redeemer tell us, that *he came to separate the son from the father, and the daughter from the mother.* And, speaking to the very case before us, he tells us that *there shall be two men in one bed, one shall be taken, and the other left: there shall be two women grinding at the mill, one shall be taken and the other left.*

Connection then, in this life, by no means implies association in the next; and the bursting of these familiar ties will doubtless add its peculiar pang to the general divorce. In the act of final separation you shall discern, your eyes will be sharpened to discern, amid the happier multitude from whom you are parting, some of your own relatives; and what, think you, will be your feelings at such a sight? Adieu, shall you then exclaim, or think within yourselves, brother, sister, father, or son; related in life, we are to have no connection beyond it; united in time, we are to be separated in eternity. Never shall I again see, never shall I again know you. You are going to an eternity of bliss, I to an eternity of wo. Then shall rush into your thoughts all the hours you had spent with them, the pious exercises in which you joined them, the edifying example they set you, all which you neglected and rendered useless; all their tender exhortations for your good, their fervent prayers in your behalf, the pious artifices by which they sought to win and entice you, as it were, into that happy path, which has brought them to their present glory,—and you would not; you persisted in your own devious ways, and preferred that broad,

downward road, at the fatal precipice of which you have now arrived.

To give double poignance to your feelings, the pangs of this separation will be all on your side; *they* will not feel them. In the sorrows of life they shared with you; they bore full half your pains. They entered into all your feelings; they sympathized with you; they wept over you: and how sweet and soothing was the balm which love and pity poured into your wounds! And all this they now exchange for the coldest insensibility. They see all your keen distress, and they regard you not. What if you are plunged into an abyss of the most terrible evils, it is nothing to them:—you are now nothing to them. In your madness, you once burst the golden chain of charity, which bound you together, and the ties of nature follow in the rupture; they give up with indifference these poor flaxen bonds, and resign you without regret to your ill-chosen lot. Nay, this is not enough. They look upon you with more than indifference; they even rejoice and triumph in your destruction. Their feelings and their affections are now exalted, and made supernatural; they are identified with those of God. You are become the enemies of God, they are his bosom friends: judge, then, whether they can persist to love or to feel for you. No, they will add to the sentence which has been pronounced against you, their fullest vote and approbation, and pursue you in your fall with all their hatred and indignation. Oh you, whose human sensibilities are keen, while your divine affections are cold; who pride yourselves on all that is refined, and tender, and ardent in kindred love, while you have too often little sense of that supreme Love who is its true bond, and its only source and centre; let the idea of this separation, at least, influence you; for it will certainly be realized, and the reality be far beyond the description.

It is true we did not stand in need either of this or the former to give us an adequate idea of the last separation; for they are, after all, but an appendix to a third, which, for want of a better epithet, I must designate as the *Individual Separation.*

Who is this Individual, my brethren, from whom you are to part? Ah! who can it be, but God himself, the great, the sole individual? This is the separation of separations, of which

nothing in this life can give us an adequate idea. However, that we may form our best conception, let us consider who God is to us; for, unfortunately, there are too many to whom, while God is every thing in reality, he is nothing in their apprehension: who, though contiguous to him at every point, and connected with him, as I may say, at every nerve, are neither mindful of the contact, nor sensible of the connection; and until they in some degree recognise what he is in their regard, they can but ill estimate what it is to part with him.

God, then, my brethren, is, in the first place, all your good; you have not a single good of any description which does not come entirely and absolutely from him. Run over in thought all that you possess;—the goods of birth and fortune, with all their concomitant comforts and advantages; of mind, natural talents, acquirements, accomplishments; all your goods of soul, if I may so term them, happy inclinations, estimable qualities, amiable dispositions, and, in fine, whatever else comes under the name of good: whence have you all this? Undoubtedly from God. Inasmuch as it is good, it is, I may say, a portion of God himself; for God is all good. Of this I know you are rather insensible than ignorant. You would be sensible of it too, were he for a moment to withdraw himself. In this life he does not; but the day will come when he will; on that day, the day of separation of which I am now speaking, you will know, and feel, what it is to be separated from all good.

In the second place, my brethren, God is to you all pleasure. Of this, likewise, you are rather unmindful than unaware; for you know, you cannot but know, that God is the source of all pleasure. Even the common daily gratifications of sense have their spring and their action in him; much more the superior delights of the soul, the rich effusions of joy, the bright irradiations of hope, the gilded visions of imagination; all these emanate from him. They are like so many little gusts, imparted to us from the great ocean of pleasure in which we are immersed. There is not a day, in which you do not taste them in some kind and degree: there will come one in which you will not; a day, in which this infinite Pleasure will withdraw, if not his presence, at least his action from you, and you will then, for the first time, know what it is to be destitute of all pleasure.

In the third place, my brethren, God is to you all love. Now of this, I conceive that you are, in some measure, ignorant as well as insensible; for you are apt to imagine that the love which you bestow upon persons or things, is entirely of your own growth, a free and absolute emanation of your own breast, without any connection with God. You are not aware that even this is, in one sense, from God; that, when regular, it is but the just use, when irregular, the abuse, of a strong principle which he has himself planted within you. That principle is no other than an incessant and insatiate longing of the soul after something, after some object to fill and satisfy it. Such object, of course, can be none but God himself; but the weak and purblind soul mistakes in her pursuit, misses her aim, and stops short at creatures. Yes, all those attachments which you feel for creatures, and which, for being erroneous, are often not the less ardent, are, in reality, nothing but the deviations and mistakes of the same innate principle, of that longing which God has given you for himself; you are all the while feeling about and blindly seeking for your God. And I will add, that, did you carefully study your own hearts, you would at last find him; did you attend to the secret warnings of this strong appetite within you, and profit by its pangs and disappointments, you would at last assuredly find and repose in him. But, neglecting these salutary lessons, and not to be taught by repeated failures, you still wander and fluctuate from one mean object to another, a stranger to true content, and a prey to all the uneasiness of a craving and unsated appetite.

However, even in this state of perversity, your situation is a paradise compared to what it will be one day, when you shall be finally separated from God; and, in losing him, as I said, shall lose all love. This strong, pleasing emotion, this master principle in the heart, shall be then torn from you; or rather, the appetite shall be left you, and every object and sedative of it be removed far away from you.

In life, you still found, even independently of God, various objects with which you contrived, if not to satiate, at least to amuse and beguile it: but when you shall separate from God, you will have nothing remaining. In the new state into which you are passing, you will look round you in vain for a single

object on which to place your affection. You will not love God; you will not love your neighbors; you will have none but tormentors and companions in guilt; you will not even love yourselves; you will be incapable even of self-affection; you will be filled and surrounded with universal desolation.

Such, my brethren, is a short but imperfect estimate of what you will lose, when you separate from God; and it is clear, at the first glance, that this world can furnish nothing like a parallel or a resemblance to it. All the losses of this life are petty and partial; whether they be of friends or fortune, they still leave us much to console us; many other persons or things still survive, who fill up the temporary chasm in our hearts, and soon make us forget our grief. Hence, all the separations of this life, are at an immense distance from that universal separation which we are considering. However, as we judge of all things by comparison, and can only form our estimate of what we do not know by what we do, they may still serve, inadequate as they are, to assist our conceptions, and to form at least a kind of groundwork of the idea we wish to raise. I will select, then, for the purpose, one of these occasions in life, one of the most interesting, and at the same time the most familiar. There are few, for example, that have not felt, at one time or another, what it is to part from a friend or a relative that is dear to them. I will first suppose the separation only temporary; let it be the departure, for a distant country, of an affectionate husband from a wife, or a fond parent from a child.

What is that painful sensation, which immediately rises in the breast at the prospect, and gathers strength and poignancy as the occasion draws near? And, when at length the dreaded moment arrives, what is that internal tumult, that palpitation, that inward suffocation, that mute anguish, which overpowers nature, and stifles even the last farewell? Does life furnish a more painful sentiment? Yes, for the separation here is but slight and short; relieved too, by frequent intercourse, and soothed with the hopes of reunion. Life has a case more in point and better adapted for our purpose,—the separation of death.

Let it be that of the desolate widow and fond mother, just bereft by a premature stroke of an only child, the pride of her maternal care, and the last prop of her widowed age. The fatal

disease baffles all human art; her self-promises and persuasions, her oft-reviving hopes and flatteries end in disappointment; her cares and her exertions, her assiduities and her night-watchings are spent in vain; her vows even, and her prayers are ineffectual; and torn, in the last extremity, by force from the couch of her dying child, she receives at a distance the dreaded tidings that the blow is struck, and she is no longer a mother! Oh! the pang of such a moment! Oh! the agony of such a separation!

To describe it I shall not attempt; all who ever felt, will better conceive, than I shall picture it. I believe life does not furnish a stronger instance, a more heart-rending separation. Let us then apply it to our subject.

Will this, think you, be like what you will feel in the act of separation from God? Yes, give it tenfold force, and depth, and poignancy, and it will just enable you to conceive something of what that last pang will be; just as if, in this life, you should compare a superficial puncture with the most vital stab. For, after all, what is the separation here instanced? that of one creature from another; that of one poor necessitous being from another. Yours will be that of the creature from its Creator; of the entirely dependent and necessitous being from the all-sufficient and independent. In that sad hour, you will lose at once your Father, your Friend, your Benefactor, your Protector; you will forfeit at one stroke the Sovereign bounty, the Sovereign beauty, the Sovereign sweetness. If, in this life, you are not sensible of him, you will be then; no extraneous object will then be left to divert or divide your affections; and your will, following then its natural impulse, will point with all its force towards him. He himself, too, for once will aid the impulse; and, darting on you in your fall one beam of his divine splendor, will make you feel in an instant the full amount of your misfortune,—what you might have gained, and what you have lost. Again, in the instance adduced, if the separation was painful, the pain was mutual, and soothed by mutual affection. The weeping mother receives in return all that a parting child can leave her: the last sighs, the last wishes, the last prayers are for her, are spent in administering to her comfort, and speaking to her heart. Bitter as the separation is, there is still a feeling of melancholy pleasure

mingled with it: even the last sad embrace, while it stings with its anguish, warms and soothes by its tenderness. Will it be so in your case? will there be any thing mutual between you and God? When you separate from him, will he make you any return for the efforts, the heavings, the longings, which your soul will involuntarily put forth towards him? He will repel you with all the force of Omnipotence. Will he make you any answer to your parting sighs and tears? His reply to you will be, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* This will be the farewell address of your God to you; the last words you will ever hear from his lips. It were enough, sure, that he repelled you; but no—he repels you with a curse. The sovereign good wishes you sovereign evil; he whose wishes are effects, whose words are deeds. If it be shocking and dreadful to hear man curse his fellow-man, what must it be to hear, and to be the object of the curse of God, and that, too, in the moment of final separation!

There is yet one circumstance wanting. The parting friends of this world still part with hope; death breaks their union, but does not terminate their prospects. They look beyond the grave, and see another world, in which they may again meet, and be happy in each other; and even with the least religious, this will generally be found to be the parting solace. But, alas! in the present case, there is no such solace left: there is here no country beyond; eternity is a land that has no confines. When you part from God, you are in your last stage of existence; you here take your leave for ever, and that not as we use the words in this life, but literally *for ever.* You shall no more see God,—you shall no more know God,—you shall no more taste of God: the separation is *for ever.* You shall sigh, and weep, and groan in vain, the separation is *for ever.* You shall count up years and centuries, and millenniums of sufferings: insufficient,—the separation is *for ever.* After you shall have accumulated whole eternities on your head, and endured torments in your conception adequate to a whole hell of crimes,—the justice of God thinks otherwise,—the plea is vain, the separation is *for ever!* Ah! my brethren, it is this that makes separation truly dreadful; it is this that loads it with insupportable anguish. Were it not for this,—were there the least hope or chance of a reunion or reversion, though it were after millions of ages and eternities

of suffering, it were enough; that single, remote, scanty ray would suffice to gild all the intervening horrors, and convert hell itself into a tolerable prison. But no! there is no such prospect, nor possibility of prospect. The decree is irrevocable, and known to be irrevocable; the sentence which the sinner carries down with him, is labelled with Eternity, and the flames of hell will only serve to illuminate it to his vision. The fatal words *for ever*, will be for ever present to his eyes; thus condensing, in a manner, into each finite moment the wo of infinitude, and while, sunk under the enormous load, he touches its vast sphere but in one point, yet crushing him at every instant, with the whole of its weight.

Such, my brethren, is the last separation. Thank God you are not involved in it; it has passed to you only in imagination. May it never pass in reality! One observation, however, already insinuated, I cannot forbear to repeat: that the number of those, who, like you, shall have incurred it in imagination, will be infinitely less than of those who shall experience its reality; *i. e.* that by far the greater part of men will be thus finally separated. Name any country, and you cannot hope for one half of its natives; point out any city, and the bulk of its inhabitants are lost; take any promiscuous assemblage of men, and it must be a very extraordinary one indeed to form an exception to the sentence. This alarming truth, my brethren, you have often heard, and you cannot hear it too often. It is not told you to dishearten you, but to rouse you to the necessary exertions; an effect, assuredly, which it is calculated to produce.

What these exertions are, my brethren, you stand in no need of hearing in detail from me. They may be comprised in one short injunction: avoid all that will separate you from God here, and you will certainly escape the separation of eternity. The evils chiefly to be apprehended by you are: First, that most general sin of spiritual sloth, that lethargy of soul, which renders you insensible to God, and makes you neglect his divine service, and therefore be neglected by him; and being neglected by him, no wonder that you fall into an abyss of disorders from which only a miracle can extricate you. Secondly, covetousness, that canker of the soul, which eats up all its better principles; with which so few in the world think themselves, and so many really

are, infected; which makes them solicitous only about their temporal interests, and ready to sacrifice every thing else to it, even the dearest concerns of their own soul. Thirdly, pride,—that blind of the understanding, which, keeping the soul ignorant of her own disorders, effectually prevents their remedy, and, in regard of others, fosters so many passions, and engenders so many sins, anger, hatred, contempt, revenge. Fourthly, detraction, that sin of the tongue, so prevalent in the world, which so often wounds and destroys charity, the vital principle of the soul, and commits so many injustices, which, being never repaired, are, of course, never forgiven, and subject the offender to all the severity of that tribunal, where those only are not condemned who have not condemned others. Whosoever values his own dearest interests, if he be conscious to himself of these or any other spiritual maladies, will make haste to seek for a remedy and effect a cure, and that without the least delay. For, be it observed, that, though the scene which I have described, may be perhaps, as to its full completion, remote, yet, as to its main part and all its substantial consequences, it is near, impending, threatening every hour; thousands over the world are every day experiencing its fearful realities. That such may not be the lot of any here present, but that we may all meet again in the happy union of the blessed, is my sincere wish and prayer.

Sermon XX.

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

FRATERNAL CHARITY.

He that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law.—Rom. xiii. 8.

The ancient schools of philosophy were distinguished from one another by tenets peculiar respectively to each of them, and the disciples of these schools, to show their conviction of the truth of these tenets, made a display of them to the world in their lives. Thus, the threadbare garments, in which some were seen ranging the streets of Rome and Athens, and the frugal manner in which they affected to spread their tables, showed at once that they were the followers of Zeno, and converts to the rigid maxims he taught. The same was done by every other sect; and, indeed, man cannot be known to belong to any particular society unless he show some external mark by which this society is distinguished. In like manner, the Philosopher of philosophers, Jesus Christ, in establishing his divine school, delivered a characteristic tenet, and appointed its practice to be the badge by which his disciples were to be distinguished from those of every other school. *This* doctrine was that of Fraternal Charity. *By this*, said he, *shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.* This, at first sight, appears surprising. One might have expected that, as the grand aim of this divine Philosopher was to bring man back from the creature to the Creator, he would have established the worship and love of the true God as the characteristic of his followers; since thus alone could they be distinguished from the Gentiles who worshipped idols, and from the Jews who, although they externally adored the true God, were inter-

nally so attached to the visible objects of enjoyment, as to love them more than him. In a word, one might have expected that, instead of the sentence which forms my text, he would have said: By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you adore the true God, and love him with all your hearts. Why did he not establish this criterion? I answer, he did establish it: it was as impossible that he should establish any other, as that he should cease to be the eternal subsisting wisdom of his Father. But, by wording it in this manner, he would at once teach us the nature of that fraternal love which he enjoins; and that, however it may differ from the love of God in appearance, it is in reality identified with it. In a word, he would teach us that, by loving our neighbors in the manner he has commanded, we are necessarily adoring and loving God. This great truth, though believed by all Christians, is not properly understood by all: and therefore I have chosen it for the subject of this day's discourse. In the first place, I will endeavor to show *what* is the origin and genuine nature of Christian fraternal charity; and, secondly, what is its range, or the persons in whom it will *exist*, and those in regard of whom it will be exercised. Thus, my brethren, my address to you, this day, is intended to be explanatory, rather than exhortative; or, to speak properly, it ought to be exhortative by being explanatory; for all the doctrines of the Catholic Church are in themselves so beautiful, that they need only to be presented in their true light to make a salutary impression upon every well-disposed heart.

There is nothing more common than to confound charity with natural benevolence, and, when we see any one remarkable for this, to pronounce such a person charitable. We constantly carry this notion into our own practice, and, on a thousand occasions, flatter ourselves that we are charitable, when we merely are yielding to our natural feelings. Oh, how great is this delusion! Were charity the mere feeling and display of kindness to others, Christ would in vain have pointed it out as the characteristic of his school; for, before his time, millions of pagans had this species of benevolence, and millions possess it at the present day, who reject this divine Saviour altogether, or, at least, deny him in the whole tenor of their lives. We

have on record, instances among the pagans, in which benevolence was carried even to an heroic degree. Were these persons, then, animated by the charity our Saviour speaks of? Did they fulfil the whole evangelical law, before it was promulgated? And while, by the profession of idolatry, they had the mark of the beast on their foreheads, did they also bear the beauteous sign which distinguishes the true Christian? In like manner, benevolence or philanthropy is felt as strongly, and as strongly marked in actions, by thousands of the present day, who wear the mark of the beast, if not as evidently, at least as really, as the ancient pagans. For this mark consists in the profession either of religious error or of vice: since every lying creed is essentially opposed to Christ, as the great teacher of truth; and vice is opposed to him, as the God of sanctity.

The fraternal love, therefore, which our Saviour speaks of in the words of my text, is not natural, but supernatural benevolence; not the effect of our physical constitution, but of the grace of God.

But we cannot form a correct notion of Christian fraternal charity, without considering for a moment, the nature of God's own love for his creatures, and the means which he established to bring them to an eternal union with himself, the great end of their creation.

God, then, existing from himself, and having within himself every thing which could make him infinitely happy, could have remained to eternity all alone in being, as supremely glorious as if myriads of worlds rolled round in perpetual homage and love. If, therefore, he determined to create a world, it was not thereby to add any thing to himself, but to communicate the being and happiness he enjoyed. Love, pure disinterested love alone could induce him to make this external manifestation of his attributes. But, in thus loving creatures, he could not but love himself; for he was essentially rational: and therefore, being the only real good which existed, or could possibly exist, he could no more refrain from loving himself in all his works, than he could cease to be God. This love in him was, as it were, a flame which issued indeed from his divine bosom in the creation, but necessarily reverberated on it again.

Now, it is evident, that the only means by which he could

bring rational creatures to an eternal union with himself, was a communication to them of this species of love; for no one can be said to be in union of heart with another, except he loves the same objects, and from the same motives. Accordingly, faith teaches us that, as natural means cannot possibly produce a supernatural effect, God, in creating our first parents and destining them to an eternal union with himself, did not leave them for an instant to their natural powers, but, letting fall on their will a spark of his own divine love, raised them to a supernatural state, in which, soaring above the world in which they lived, they reached God himself, and loving him, loved all other things as he loved them, that is to say, in him and for him. Hence the love they were inspired to have for each other, was of exactly the same nature as the love they had for God, and differed from it only in this, that it tended to its object indirectly and through the medium of the creature. For, as I have already observed, being an emanation of God's own love, it necessarily played back on its sacred source. In the designs of God, then, the love, which he willed rational creatures to bear to one another, or as we call it, fraternal charity, was to have a double object: first, it was intended to connect them with each other; and secondly, by so doing, to bind them all to God. It was to be a celestial chain, which, fixed in God's own bosom, should throw its sacred links round every being created to enjoy him, and then redouble on the point from which it had issued.

This is the sublime view which the Catholic Church takes of fraternal charity, as communicated to our first parents, and as it would have existed in their posterity, had our first parents preserved their innocence. But, on man's prevarication, this supernatural love was withdrawn from him, and his will was suffered to fall into its natural condition, or rather sunk beneath it in punishment of his sin. No longer borne above the sphere of creation by this sacred flame of love, it grovelled on the earth, and like the appetites of brute beasts, terminated all its actions on itself. In a word, it became that capricious, irregular power, which we call human benevolence, ever fluctuating, ever varying, and granting or denying its favors exactly as animal feelings were gratified or wounded.

Such was man's deplorable condition, after his fall; and in

this condition he must have continued, deprived of his last end, because deprived of charity, which alone could bring him to it, had not the same love which induced God to create him, prompted him to devise the means of saving him. These means were a new, and still more stupendous creation. A human nature was formed, which being hypostatically united with the divine nature, was enriched by God with all supernatural gifts, in a degree exceeding all finite comprehension. Among these gifts, charity was poured on this Man-God not in measure, as it had been on our first parents, but in a boundless, overflowing flood, and he was constituted the parent, from whom, as from another, but infinitely more exalted Adam, this principle of spiritual life should be derived to all mankind. Thus after the fall of Adam, charity was no longer to descend on man directly and immediately from its source in the bosom of God, but to flow to him from its vast deposit in the heart of Jesus Christ. Hence St. John says, *Of his plenitude we have all received.* And he himself says, *I came down from heaven to cast fire on the earth, and what do I desire, but that it should be enkindled.* The same great fundamental truth of Christianity he has illustrated in the most amiable and beautiful manner, by the allegory of the vine. *I am the vine,* says he, *you are the branches. As a branch cannot bring forth fruit of itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. For, without me, you can do nothing.*

But let it be remembered, that charity, in the second Adam, is exactly of the same nature as it was in the first Adam, though incomprehensibly more intense. It is still of the same species as God's own love for his creatures, and therefore, whatever may be its immediate objects, it essentially rebounds from them to him. Hence, Christ loves, with an ardor and tenderness surpassing all finite understandings, every creature which his Divine Father loves, but, like his Father, he loves them in him, and for him alone. Hence, also, those who are in union with Christ, who, being branches of this heavenly Vine, derive from it their vital principle, will love their fellow-creatures in exactly the same manner. God, the source of their love, will be in all instances its motive and ultimate object. With this idea of Christian fraternal charity in our minds, we can have no difficulty in con-

ceiving how this virtue must necessarily distinguish Christ's true disciples from all other mortals, and how its practice is the fulfilment of the whole evangelical law. For, as by it we are animated with Christ's own spirit, we must necessarily wear his own characteristic; and as, by loving God's creatures with this species of love, we essentially love God himself, we consequently accomplish the whole object of revelation, which is to unite man to God. Having thus endeavored briefly to explain the origin and nature of fraternal charity, I proceed now to its range, or the subjects in whom it will necessarily exist, and the objects in regard of whom it will be exercised.

When I consider the range of fraternal charity, my mind is almost bewildered in the vast field which opens to view. For, in the first place, who are the subjects in which this virtue will be found? Are they not, evidently, all those who love God's creatures in him and for him; and, consequently, are they not all beings, in the whole round of creation, who are in union with him? What! shall this spark of heavenly flame warm only the inhabitants of the earth? and shall the blessed in heaven, who are engulfed in its divine source, feel nothing of it? Shall God continue to cherish mortals with an infinite love, and shall the just, when they have thrown away the damping qualities of mortality, be indifferent in our regard? No! Let the frozen souls of Luther and Calvin attempt to confine this heavenly virtue to this nether world, and to the short moment of our existence here! As for us, who have our faith, not from Germany or France, but from Sion, not from self-constituted Reformers of the sixteenth century, but from *Him*, who, having founded the Catholic Church, has promised to be with it all days even to the consummation of the world,—we, I say, have no such contracted notions. Heaven, we cry out, is the native land of fraternal charity: there she breathes the pure air in which she was born; there is her health complete, her life in all its integrity. On earth, she is often infected by the pestilential vapors in which she is forced to live, and her activity is in a great measure deadened by the load of flesh under which she groans. *Charity*, says St. Paul, *falleth not away*. Faith shall disappear in vision, hope in fruition, but charity shall be eternal, like God. Yes, my brethren, we know, with the Christian Church in all ages, that

our brethren who are gone before us to our Lord are still connected with us by this sacred bond: consequently, we know they pray for us, and this by the will and commandment of God himself. In fact, why do we pray for one another here below? Why are we expressly commanded to do so in so many passages of the holy Scripture? Is it because Jesus Christ's perpetual intercession for us is insufficient? No! we reply, but because prayers, which are the effects of fraternal charity, are virtually and in reality his own prayers, since he himself inspires them and gives them all their efficacy. So far, then, are they from interfering with his all-sufficient intercession, that they are its very action and application; while, at the same time, they beautifully work that union among us, which he so emphatically prayed for us at his last supper. *Holy Father, keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me: that they may be one, as we are one.* Now these same reasons are equally applicable to the blessed in heaven, and demonstrate that, whilst their prayers for us no way derogate from Christ's all-sufficient intercession, they are, by God's own ordinance, one of the parts of that lovely band, by which he would connect his beloved children one to another, whatever be their abode or condition. Thus, my brethren, our practice of invoking the inhabitants of heaven, is exactly of the same nature as our petitions to one another for prayer here below, and our belief that they do pray for us springs from the certainty we have that they are animated by fraternal charity, which, being of the same species as God's own love for his creatures, essentially tends to promote the happiness of others. In a word, the Catholic doctrine on the subject on the invocation of saints, is not so much a separate tenet, as one of the numerous views which the holy Scripture gives us of the operation of fraternal charity. No wonder, then, that, thus springing from the first principles of Christianity, it can be so evidently traced through all antiquity, and that, till modern times, all Christians, however much they differed in other points, unanimously agreed in this.

But if all beings in the whole round of creation who love God, are necessarily the subjects in whom fraternal charity will be found, so all beings in the same range, whom God loves, must also be the objects in regard of whom fraternal charity will be

exercised. Hence, only the damned in hell are excluded from its action. They, too, are the creatures of God, and were once beloved by him with the same love wherewith he cherishes his other rational creatures; a love tending to bring them to a union with himself. But they voluntarily resisted this action of his love. They would be concentred within themselves. They impiously and sacrilegiously erected themselves into gods, and loved these gods alone. Justly, then, and deservedly, has he abandoned them to themselves, and left them in an eternal excommunication from his love and all its effects on his creatures.

But with the exception of these wretches, all other beings whatever, that are stamped with the image of God, are necessarily the objects of fraternal charity. Oh! how erroneous then is the idea which so many of our dissenting brethren form, of the Catholic system of benevolence. According to them, a Catholic has essentially a contracted heart; one which has tenderness of love only for those of his own communion, and a hatred, or at least an antipathy for all others. Would to God such deluded persons could enter the heart of a genuine Catholic, and witness what passes there. With astonishment they would exclaim, with Jacob, *Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not.* They would see that this heart is a copy of the heart of Jesus Christ, and, though infinitely beneath the original, retains within it all its leading qualities, and, instead of being contracted, has no other limits than those which bound that sacred organ of love. Yes, in this heart they would find every object which Jesus Christ cherishes in his own; because this heart is in union with him, and consequently loves as he loves. Now, who are those who are to be found in the heart of Jesus Christ? Are those excluded from this heart who differ with me in faith? Ah, no! for he is the good shepherd, and his heart yearns for the lost sheep with still more tenderness than for those that are in the fold. Is the benighted pagan excluded from the heart of Jesus? No! *For he is the light for the revelation of the Gentiles. To enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.* Do the Jews, who pierced this heart, still find a place in it? Yes: and his dying prayer for them has already insured their conversion. Are sinners who slight his love, and in their own hearts prefer every base object before him,

exiled from his? Certainly not! for them, and not for the just, he became man: they are the price of his blood; and, at his command, all heaven rejoices over their conversion. Is the impious philosopher, he who throws back on him the grand present of revelation; who proudly disclaims to be redeemed; who scoffs at his wisdom, ridicules his goodness, wishes for his extinction; is this monster to be found in the heart of Jesus Christ? Yes, my brethren, even he. It is Jesus who supports him in being: it is he who interposes this very heart between the wrath of his eternal Father and this miscreant: it is he who bids nature feed and clothe him, and be the kind channel of a thousand emanations of his sweetness and bounty; in a word, it is he who still shoots a thousand flashes of truth across his darkened mind, and awakens a thousand remorses in his hardened conscience, for the purpose of reclaiming him. Finally, is the man who blackens my character unjustly, who invades my property, is full of rancor for my person, and lays snares for my life, is he too, in the heart of Jesus? Undoubtedly; for Jesus commands me to love him, and he cannot but himself love what he commands me to love. This very commandment is an expression of his love. Who, then, is excluded from the heart of Jesus Christ? No mortal whatever, during this present state of probation; and consequently there is no mortal whatever, but is affectionately cherished by the genuine member of the Catholic Church.

But this sublunary world occupies only a diminutive portion of the heart of Jesus Christ. The myriads of blessed spirits who surround his throne, the countless multitudes of the just made perfect, who eternally sing his praises, those dearly beloved children of his whom he is purifying from the stains which they carried with them from this world and fitting for his presence, are all safely locked up in that sacred heart, which is to be their abode for ever. And shall not these dear objects have a place in every heart which is in union with his? Shall they be excluded from ours?

Oh! my brethren, how consoling again and beautiful is the view which the Catholic Church takes of fraternal charity? How worthy of a God of love! Have our brethren departed from this state of probation and gone to another world? They

are not separated from us; they have slept, we hope, in peace, and in the friendship of God: being, therefore, tenderly beloved by him; they are also objects of our charity. We accompany them thus to the abodes prepared for them, and sympathize in their lot. Have they carried with them the signs of their frail condition in this world, and are their robes devoid of that spotless whiteness wherewith they must appear before the Lamb? Are they therefore checked in their journey to paradise, and forced to undergo a final, but most painful preparation for that blessed abode? We join our sorrows to theirs: we weep over their pangs, and endeavor to alleviate and shorten them: we raise our hearts to the God of mercy in their behalf: we exhibit before him, in their favor, the body and blood of his divine Son, and we know, with all true believers, ever since the beginning of the world, that he, whose love for them has inspired these efforts, will bless them, and will show our brethren, as St. Augustine says, more mercy than their sins deserve. Are they already inhabitants of heaven? Thither also the genuine disciple of Christ will follow them. Soaring on the wings of charity, above this vale of tears, *He will*, as St. Paul says, *come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born, who are written in heaven, and to the spirits of the just made perfect.* With all these he will necessarily have communion, that is to say, exercise an exchange of kindness. They will give him the assistance of prayers. But what has he to bestow in return? He has, indeed, nothing to give to them who, in possessing God, possess all things. But fraternal love is not exercised in one only way, but in a thousand. It has not only a tendency to confer happiness on God's creatures, but also a necessary disposition to take complacency in the happiness which they actually enjoy, and to express this complacency by every means in its power. This we see exemplified even in the base benevolence which is a quality of our nature. Whoever feels a deep interest in the welfare of another, naturally shows signs of joy on occasion of his advantages, and is as grateful to the authors of them as if they had been bestowed on himself. Here, then, we see the origin and nature of the festivals celebrated by Catholics in

honor of the saints. They are the expression of our joy for their triumph and felicity: they are the solemn thanksgivings which we offer to God for the favors that he has bestowed on them; in a word, they are our exercise of fraternal charity in regard of those on whom we have nothing else to bestow: and therefore this practice, so far from being superstitious, is in substance essential to Christianity, since it flows from that divine system of fraternal love which is its basis and grand characteristic.

From all I have said, it is evident how sublime and beautiful is the character of the perfect disciple of Jesus Christ, the charitable Christian. Elevated by the sacred flame of charity above himself, and expanded beyond his natural limits, he diffuses himself through the whole creation, and communes in the happiness or misery of every one. No longer a single mortal, confined within the sphere of his own lot, he is multiplied with all the objects of God's love, and is what they are, in every variety of condition. *He rejoices with them that rejoice*, says St. Paul, *and weeps with them that weep.* Are others, for instance, born to riches, ease and honor, and is he doomed to pass his life in drudgery and obscurity? Does Providence appear to smile on them, while it marks him out for misfortune and disappointment? Does health shed comforts on them, whilst disease pursues him with pain and sorrow? Have they perfections, either corporal or mental, which he has not; and does God favor them with graces not granted to himself? Ah! envy is a stranger to his bosom: sweet charity is there with her benevolence; and his eye, under the influence of this heavenly charm, regards as a blessing to himself, every advantage in the possession of others. Reverse the picture, and suppose him the favored child of Providence, while others seem to be its outcasts. Here it is that he principally resembles his benevolent Saviour. Animated by him, who is good and communicative of good by essence, he is restless under the sole possession of happiness, and longs with more ardor to communicate his own advantages, than the bad Christian sighs for the advantages of others. Nor do these benevolent feelings depend on the qualities of their objects. Excited by God and having him for their motive, they are regulated by his love alone, and are, in every instance, commensurate

to the degree in which that sacred passion reigns in his soul. Hence, though envy pour her envenomed breath on his actions and intentions, though ingratitude efface every trace of his goodness, though malice return hatred and persecution for his love, he remains the same, or, if any change take place in his heart, it is that the very efforts made by man to contract it, only occasion its enlargement, and what naturally would check its pulsations, only throws into it a greater warmth, and accelerates the generous flow of its affections.

I need not say, in a Christian audience, that I do not exaggerate in my description of the feelings of Christian benevolence. Not only is this disposition necessarily inferred from the nature of true charity, as I have already explained it; not only was it displayed in complete perfection by Jesus Christ; but it has existed in millions of professors of Christianity, in every age, and in every clime. What were the feelings of the blessed Stephen, when, expiring under the ruthless hands of those whose eternal happiness he had been promoting, he cried out, *Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!* What were the feelings of St. Paul, when he wished to be an outcast from God himself, provided those were eternally happy who were plotting his destruction? What were the feelings of those thousands of holy ministers of the Gospel, who planted the faith in a barbarous world, and who, in requital for all their labors in communicating happiness to others, met with injuries of every description, and death in every form? In a word, what are the feelings at this moment of generous Christians, who, notwithstanding the influence of a chilly and selfish age, have hearts still glowing with this celestial fire, thus proving themselves the genuine offspring of Christ's immortal spouse, who is always holy, because always charitable?

In conclusion, let me request that you, my brethren consider how far your habitual feelings coincide with those which I have been describing, and thus endeavor to ascertain whether you be, or not, the genuine disciples of Jesus Christ. Is God the sole motive of your benevolence? Is it he, whom you have in view in every act of kindness you perform? Is there no object in the heart of Jesus, which you exclude from yours? Do you sincerely participate in the joys and sorrows of all your

fellow-creatures, and do you feel their lot identified with your own? Are the blessings which Providence has bestowed on you, a mere deposit in your hands, and do you let them out freely into the empty bosoms of the needy? Have the infirm, the captives, the houseless, a friend and refuge in you, and does every one that mourns find in you a comforter? Is the reputation of others as precious in your eyes, as your own; and do you watch over it with the same anxious solicitude? Does the eternal salvation of all mankind lie near your heart, and do you endeavor to promote it by every means in your power? Happy those who can answer affimatively to all these questions, and who shall be able to make good the same answer at the tribunal of their Saviour. They alone will be acknowledged by him as his true disciples; and *where he is, they also shall be*,—ingulfed in the fountain-head of love and happiness for all eternity.

Sermon XXX.

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.

ON HELL.

Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.—MATT. xiii. 30.

THE awful attribute of justice, so terrible to the offending creature, is, however, essential to the all-perfect Creator. In vain would the impious man and the conscious sinner strip him of it; in vain do they force their own reason, and strive to frame to themselves a Deity according to their own guilty minds; one who should be all bounty; benevolent, but not avenging; his justice absorbt in his goodness. The latter, indeed, in this life, is often seen, according to the repeated expressions of Scripture, to surpass the other; still this is absolutely indispensable to him, and must, in its proper place, vindicate its rights, and establish its equality.

This earth, it is obvious, is not its adequate theatre. Striking as are the judgments of God, that have been from time to time displayed on its surface, they are at most but a few overflowing drops of that cup of vengeance, the full contents of which are to be poured out in another place. Yes, my brethren, it is in hell, that God purposely and avowedly displays his justice, and to that dreary realm must we resort, to form a just conception of it. Thank God, it is not necessary, in order to do so, that we should descend thither in reality; revelation has provided us with all the requisite lights; and by their aid I propose to display to you, but in a brief and rapid survey, that awful scene, which the Almighty has chosen for the eternal theatre of his justice.

And let no Christian, with a false delicacy, shrink from the alarming subject; for few moral topics are more salutary or more necessary. With its wholesome terrors it was that the solitaries of the deserts frequently encouraged themselves in their penitential career, and that the martyrs animated and hardened themselves to their excruciating torments; it may even be said, as it has been said, that at these infernal flames, did many of the most fervent lovers of God first kindle that divine and celestial fire, which afterwards burned so ardently in their breasts. Consequently, every Christian may, with undoubted profit, give this subject a place in his meditations; the weak and wavering may derive from it a new and useful stimulus to their fear, and the fervent and constant an additional incentive to their love. *Come then, and see the works of the Lord, terrible in his counsels over the children of men.*

In opposition to a prejudice which, on this and similar subjects is too generally prevalent, I must premise that it is one on which exaggeration need not be feared, because it is impossible; the most fervid mind, the most powerful imagination of man in this life, never yet pictured to itself its real terrors; they are, alas, adequately conceived by those only who experience them. The reason is clear—they are the exertion of the justice of God, of Him who, in all his attributes, is incomprehensible; and, as we find it impossible to conceive aright the extent of his power, his goodness, or his wisdom, we may be sure, that with the utmost enlargement of our ideas we shall never estimate duly the weight of his justice. You may, therefore, on such a subject, securely give the reins to your imagination and follow me unhesitatingly in the description.

Begin by conceiving a vaulted prison, cast by the hand of the almighty Architect, intended originally for the rebel spirits of heaven, subsequently for their imitators, the sinners of the earth. This is the first notion of hell; it is a prison. Its inexorable doors, once closed on the prisoner, never reopen; in vain does he look round for any outlet, any escape: an almighty hand binds him down. The dungeons of this world allow some room to their inmates, some range for motion and action; but the prisoners of hell are otherwise situated; each one of them is bound down in his own eternal place, deprived of all liberty

and power, unable alike to flee from his tormentors, to resist their assaults, or to afford himself the slightest relief by a change of position. It is thus man is punished for the misuse of that liberty which he prizes so much on earth, but which he so often wickedly perverts; and, considering his natural activity, his restlessness, his impatience of restraint, this itself must be an insupportable torment. Yet this is only a preliminary, a preparation for his torment.

Then comes that fire, those vengeful flames, so often mentioned in Scripture. Fire, of all the elements of this world, as it is the most inexplicable in its nature, is the most terrible in its effects. Observe it in action; see how rapid and violent it is; how it rages round its prey; with what fury it envelopes it; how it subsists only by its destruction, and immediately expires with it. Approach, and try its effects on your sensitive frame; or, if you have ever witnessed its action upon animal life, see the instant agitation, the writhings, the tortures of its unhappy victim, expressive of intolerable anguish. If such be the fire of this world, created for our use and subjected to our control, it may enable us to conceive another of a higher order, created by God expressly for vengeance, blown up by his own breath to a ten-thousandfold intensity, and endued with the wonderful property, which he can give it, of acting on the soul as well as the body. It is in a fire of this kind that these prisoners are plunged; they dwell in it, according to the expression of the prophet, as their element. Each one of them in his separate dungeon, invested on all sides, its burning waves raging round them, above them, and completely enveloping their whole substance, and converting them in a manner into fire itself, according to the expression of another prophet: *Thou shalt make them a furnace of fire.*

Nor is it merely in these particulars that the flames of hell differ from our feeble element. Our fire perishes by its own violence; it first annihilates, or at least dissipates the subject upon which it feeds, and then itself expires. But the peculiar and most terrible property of hell-fire is, that it is imperishable in its action; that it burns without consuming; that it renovates its own fuel, preserves what it should naturally destroy, and only seasons it for torment. The idea is not mine; it is given

us by our Redeemer himself, in that remarkable expression: *They shall be salted with fire.*

It were still some alleviation for the sufferers, if the fire which burned them, afforded them light in their dungeon; but as one of the enjoyments of the blessed is to consist in brightness and glory, so one of the torments of the reprobate will be the gloom and darkness of their prison, admitting no ray of light, except such as may serve to aggravate their situation, and render darkness itself more horrible. How delightful and cheering is light, and how painful to the aching sense the long privation of it! What an aggravation to a sick man's sufferings are the tedious hours of darkness and solitude, and how eagerly does he hail the first breakings of the cheerful morn! How horrible was that preternatural darkness which sat on the land of Egypt, so thick that it might be felt by the hand, as the Scripture says. It may not be amiss to hear its description: *Being fettered in the bonds of darkness*, says the inspired writer, *and a long night they lay there, exiled from the eternal Providence. Neither did the den that held them keep them from fear; for noises coming down troubled them, and sad visions appearing to them affrighted them. And no power of fire could give them light, neither could the bright flame of the stars enlighten that horrible night.* Yet that night was at last relieved by morning; but here, on the long night of the damned, no morning shall ever dawn, no friendly ray shall by any chance wander across their infernal gloom; but a thick pitchy darkness, for ever brooding over their low dungeon, will aggravate all its horrors, redouble all its torments, and wrap up and concentrate all the senses of the damned in their own miserable destiny.

Still, the condition of the reprobate would not be utterly desperate if they suffered in solitude, or at least in such society as were supportable; but the last aggravation of their prison is the company that infests it. This is no other than the infernal spirits, those spirits created for vengeance, according to the expression of holy writ; who, from being once the beautiful inhabitants of heaven, are now become the foul and hideous monsters of the infernal deep, and are therefore depicted to us in Scripture under the frightful forms of dragons, asps, and basilisks. While they themselves continually smart under the

divine vengeance, they are deputed to exercise it upon others; an office for which they are but too well qualified by their power, their craft, and their malignity. They will incessantly haunt the wretched sufferers, and hang over them in their torments, allowing them no rest, continually goading and exasperating them, mocking at their pains, and stinging them with the cruellest taunts and reproaches. If the wanton levity of a bystander so much aggravates the pain of a sufferer here on earth, judge what must be the condition of these sufferers in hell, continually writhing under the most excruciating pangs, while every pang is sharpened and redoubled by the insatiate malice of these never-sleeping executioners.

Nor think that they will find, in the mean time, any solace from their fellows in damnation. No one here will have the will, even if he had the power, to stir a finger for the comfort or convenience of any neighbor: they will all hate and execrate one another, and continually discharge on each other all that bitter but impotent malice with which their souls overflow. And, as to those who have been accomplices in sin, being eternally yoked together by the just judgment of God, they will find in the sight and company of each other a new hell; they will be to one another implacable furies, and expiate their guilty passion by the most cruel hatred. In fine, conceive a mingled scene of endless discord, war, rage, hatred, and revenge, and you will have some idea of this *land of misery and darkness, where no order, but everlasting horror dwells.*

I have here only sketched for you its main features; to complete the picture, you must subjoin to it an accumulation of other circumstances—the noisome stench of this lower pit; the dismal sounds that eternally ring there; the groans and curses of the tormented; the yells and hissings of the infernal dragons, their tormentors; the reverberating blast and roaring of the flames; the cruel hunger and thirst, never to be alleviated even by one drop of water. And when you have put together these circumstances and whatever of this kind the terrified imagination can invent, do you think you have finished the subject, and formed an adequate conception of hell? Ah! *come and see the works of the Lord, terrible in his counsels over the children of men.* You have yet entered into only half its terrors, and that the

smaller half. All that you have hitherto contemplated relates chiefly to the body: but it is the soul that is the seat of pain, and it is there mainly, in it and its immortal power, that the justice of God will satiate itself, and fix its sharpest arrows. Follow me, then, through this other part of the subject, if less painful in sound and description, yet far more awful to the reflecting mind.

The human soul is the master-piece of God; its powers and its passions are most wonderful; let us then observe two or three of them under the action of divine justice in the world to come.

Conscience is that power of the soul by which she knows herself, by which she sees what is within her, by which she discerns right and wrong, by which she is happy in innocence and wretched in guilt. As in this life *a good conscience is a perpetual feast*, so a guilty conscience is an insufferable torment. It neutralizes every joy; it is a sting that allows no rest; it haunts the unhappy wretch so far as not unfrequently to make him throw himself spontaneously on human justice, and seek for relief to his tortured mind in a public confession and an ignominious death. But alas! the guilty conscience of this world, if painful, is salutary; it is given rather as a monitor than a tormentor; but in hell its office is not to amend, (that, alas! is now hopeless,) but to torment; it is purely penal and vindictive. There, in his eternal dungeon, lies the unhappy wretch, fastened down to this cruel companion, which never lets him sleep, but continually rouses him to anguish, and forces him to view the odious portrait of himself. He sees himself a wretch, a reprobate, the outcast of creation; he sees his soul stained, infected, and penetrated with sin, a foul poison which now can never be extracted; he is an object of horror to himself, and his own most cruel tormentor. This is what is meant by that singular expression so often used by our divine Redeemer. *Their worm dies not.* Yes, this voracious reptile fastens on the soul, eats into its very vitals, pierces and repierces its immortal substance, gnaws without being ever wearied, and devours without ever destroying. I know of no words that convey this truth better than those of Job: *They that devour me sleep not.*

Then comes memory to increase his torment,—that various and active power, which in life so promptly administered to his wants and his enjoyments: its sad and single office now, is to collect from the past all that can make him miserable. He remembers his sins; he remembers the first sin he ever committed,—that unhappy day, when his yet free and well-balanced soul wantonly made the fatal transition from right to wrong: he remembers for what a trifle he made the inestimable sacrifice; how empty, how miserable, how momentary was the guilty pleasure at which he snatched; how base in itself, how bitter in its fruits. He remembers how, untaught by the severe lesson, he suffered himself to be again deluded, repeated his offence, and at last became familiar with iniquity, persisted in it in spite of conviction, in spite of constant disappointment. Then he remembers all the efforts that were made to recover and to save him; all the graces he received from God, all the remorses of conscience within, all the warnings from without, the exhortations of his spiritual guide, the good examples of others, the prayers of his friends; all which he frustrated. He calls to mind the powerful helps which he had in his own hand; the sacraments, the holy sacrifice, prayers, alms-deeds. A little exertion, and any one of these would have saved him; a single confession, well made, a few fervent prayers, one short act of sincere contrition, would have been enough; and he was so infatuated as to neglect it. He had it once in his power, but it is now too late; he had the precious moment in his hand, and let it slip; he had but to move a finger, and he would have turned aside with ease the immense load of wo that oppresses him; and now, there is no power in heaven or earth, that will ever be able to remove, or to alleviate it. Then it is, that the unhappy wretch hates and curses himself, and, acknowledging the justice of his punishment, becomes his own voluntary executioner; his infuriate soul can be compared to nothing better than the fabled reptile, which, in the fury of its pain, is said to turn on itself, and sting its own vitals!

Next, imagination rises up to his torment. It represents to him, in bitter contrast, all that he was created for; it busily paints to him the joys of heaven; it transports him thither, and shows him all the bliss, all the delights of that glorious king-

dom, and then suggests to him, cruelly suggests, that all this was once, if he had pleased, his own; that he was positively created for it, and might have obtained it with the greatest ease; and he has deliberately exchanged it for his own desperate condition. He sees the saints of God, many of them his own acquaintance, his friends and relatives, some of them even once his subjects and dependants, happy with God, and entirely wrapped up in their own joys, without the least care or concern for the reprobate who is thus cruelly tormented at a distance; or, if ever they regard or remember him, approving of his torments, as due to the justice of that God who is now their only object. Then shall the wretch fall back again in despair upon himself, and verify the words of the Prophet: *The sinner shall see, and shall be enraged; he shall gnash his teeth and pine away.*

Let us now see how the passions, those springs of the soul, will act upon the sinner, and exert all their force in grinding and oppressing that spiritual substance which they served to guide and impel before. Fear, that most painful sentiment, will ever haunt him with terrible apprehensions, with horrible imaginings. Sadness will ever steep his soul in the most black and bitter melancholy. Desire will incessantly corrode his heart with insatiate and vain longings; and aversion torture him with the most hateful repugnances. Oh! the cruel situation of ever wishing for what can never be, and always hating what must be for ever.

But we need not dwell on the rest; there is one passion which will serve for all, as it is the master-principle, and indeed, properly understood, the sole passion of the breast. The sinner once loved God; he once felt the charm of that sacred and ravishing influence; or at least, he loved the creatures of God; he amused, if he could not satiate his heart with them; he misdirected the tendency, but he felt some of its sweetness. Now, all creatures being withdrawn from him, his soul will violently turn to its natural object, will expand to its Creator all its vast capacity, and heave towards him with a force, of which we shall in vain seek for an image in this life; and, terrible to think, this all-essential Creator will incessantly mock and repel all her efforts, and, with the whole force of his omnipotent arm, bind

her down in this state of violence. He may form some idea of this, who has ever felt what it is to have the heart torn asunder from some dear object, if he only conceive that object, instead of being trivial and transient, to be infinitely charming and inestimable; but he will still more correctly imagine it, who has had his most ardent affection flung back upon him with contempt, by the only object in which his heart was centred. Yes, this is the real state, only infinitely more intense, of the soul reprobated by God. She was created essentially for good; God is the sovereign good, the only good: the infinite beauty, the source and centre of all love; yet he will not be loved by her, much less will he ever love her; on the contrary, he repels all her approaches, and spurns her for ever from him. Nay, more than this, he becomes himself her tormentor, and she knows and feels that what she suffers comes from him; that his pleasure is her pain, and that it is his hand all the while, that divine hand, so amiable in itself, but so terrible to her, which prepares unseen and inflicts all her tortures. Here, then, doubtless it is, that occurs that mourning and weeping, so often spoken of by our Redeemer. The unhappy creature, thus flung off from her only good, abandons herself to her anguish, and pours out torrents of bitter tears; tears, still happy, could they be of the least avail, or ever hope to soften the anger or move the pity of her offended Creator. But they are utterly fruitless; he views them with the most perfect indifference, and suffers her to weep on, unpitied and unregarded. Then the unhappy wretch curses the day on which he was born; then his whole soul becomes a hell to itself, more cruel than that which surrounds it, and is torn in pieces by all the conflicting furies of remorse, hatred, rage and despair.

Is this picture of hell, my brethren, think you, now complete? No, it yet wants its last and most terrible circumstance. What we have hitherto seen is dreadful indeed, yet it can be conceived; it is finite; but to suit an infinite God, it must have something of infinitude about it, and therefore hell then only becomes truly hell and completely overwhelming to us, when collecting together all its torments, (which, you must ever remember, though I have described them one by one, act in reality all at once in all their intensity,) we add, that all these inexpressible torments without

change, without intermission, without alleviation, are to last for ever! Let us try to conceive and to feel what this means. Will, then, a God of unbounded goodness and mercy see his once beloved creature in all this complication of extreme torture, and never relent? Never! How dreadful to our imagination is the situation of a human being passing an entire day or night in excruciating pain! Extend it then through his whole life, or protract it through a century; what think you of such a doom? Well, then, proceed farther yet; go back to the commencement of time, and conceive, what will not be mere fiction, the first of the damned during six thousand years, during the slow revolution of so many years and ages and milleniums, while vast empires had time to rise and fall, and countless generations of men to come and disappear, suffering during this immense period, not the petty pangs of this life, but the overwhelming pains of the other; and tell me whether you conceive it possible that a God of infinite compassion, who, from the sinner on earth, would accept a single prayer or tear in atonement for all his sins, can see all this vast series of suffering, and not relent at it? He never will; it is certain, that he never will.

Let us proceed farther, and, in order to aid our conceptions, make a supposition, which has been often made, but has not the less force on that account. Let us suppose that the injured Creator should make with his suffering creature this hard condition, that from all his floods of tears he would accept and lay by one in a thousand years, till he should have shed enough, I do not say to make a river, nor even to form an ocean, but to fill up, to the very summit, the immense void between heaven and earth! Consider well the terms of the agreement; what kind of a grace does this seem to you? The oldest inhabitant of that land of desolation would yet have shed but six tears,—six tears against an ocean; the term surely could never arrive; this is but another idea for eternity itself! You are mistaken,—the time would certainly come,—the time would come, when he would first see half of his immense task completed: then he would achieve another half of the still immense remainder; and at last,—ah! when?—but the time would at last come, when the unhappy wretch would exult to see the immeasurable ocean just swelling to its full accomplishment, and only one tear want-

ing to complete its level! And would not God then, do you think, a God of infinite love, he who once died for man, would he not then, at least, begin to relent, and make some allowance for all this suffering? No, not the slightest: the supposition is a fiction, and it will never be realized. Begin again, unhappy sufferer; weep afresh, and when thou shalt have shed oceans of oceans of such tears, thou wilt still have labored in vain: thy eternity will be still entire; God will live for ever, and thou be tormented for ever,—for ever, for ever, for ever! Oh, eternity! who ever yet considered thee aright? and who, that ever seriously thought of thee, could dare to sin?

Such, my brethren, is the idea I am able to give you of the justice of God, and of that woful place which he has destined for its eternal theatre. It is, after all, but a faint sketch, the feeble draft of a feeble imagination: judge, then, what must be its reality. In attempting it, I surely cannot, as a minister of the gospel, have merely had in view to raise a momentary ebulition of amazement or terror; no: there is no subject more practically useful. Let those who love God, and who humbly hope they are in his favor, here see how much they owe him, and what they have been delivered from; reflecting, as they lift their eyes upwards from the horrid abyss, that they were once its devoted victims, debtors to the goodness of God by all that it contains. And who is there, that does not verify in himself the reflection? Well considered, I know not a stronger motive to divine love.

And let those who are yet enemies of God, if unfortunately there should be any here, see what awaits them, and over what a terrible abyss they are at this very moment hanging. And as to those who yet have the temerity to offend God occasionally by mortal sin, let them remember, that, every time they sin, they madly propel themselves to the brink of the terrible precipice; that they are only held up from its irremeable gulf by that very divine hand which they provoke; that God's mercy, though infinite in itself, is limited in its exercise; and that no one is so likely to be a select object of vengeance, as he, who has been warned, and yet deliberately repeats the provocation. Let us all cherish as the greatest of treasures, and prize as the most solid of all principles, in opposition to the

spirit of the world, which knows it not or undervalues it, that salutary fear of God, which is so often pointed out to us as the beginning of wisdom; being assured, that we all stand in need of it for salvation; that God is inscrutable in his judgments; that many will come into that place of wo, who once never expected it; that many have ended ill, who began well, as some have ended well, who began ill; that final perseverance is a grace of God, which he owes to no man; and that he only can justly hope for it, who, to the last, works out his salvation with fear and trembling.

Sermon XV.

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

ON DEATH.

It is decreed for all men once to die.—Heb. ix. 27.

No words could more plainly announce the subject which they were chosen to introduce. Be not surprised, my friends, that I select for the entertainment of this day, the trite and familiar subject of death: for it is one of the few topics of which the triteness can never be an impediment to the interest. It is too closely interwoven with our strongest sensibilities, ever to become indifferent to us; it presses too near on the daily hopes and fears of mortal man, not to be heard by him with attention, though it were repeated to the thousandth and ten thousandth time. The season is also congenial to the subject; for we are in that period of the year, when nature herself seems to press it on our attention; when, by the decay of all around us, she strikingly warns us of our own approaching decay; and when, by the extinction of life, which is so prevalent now in the vegetable world, and by the increased mortality which commonly marks this season in our own species, she silently but expressively preaches to us, that we are perishable beings, and doomed to die. Give me therefore, if you please, once more your attention, while I dwell for a short interval on this interesting topic.

It is generally considered by moralists under two heads,—the certainty and the uncertainty of death; for the present I mean to confine myself chiefly to the former. The uncertainty of death, that is, our utter ignorance of its time and all its circumstances, if it makes a strong, seldom makes a durable impression. However eloquently inculcated, or however pointedly enforced

even by surrounding and almost contiguous examples, it startles for a moment, but is quickly forgotten. One finds a refuge from it in his youth, another in his manly vigour, a third in his uninterrupted health; and all, while they acknowledge the general danger, secretly flatter themselves with being individually an exception to it, and live on without apprehension.

But from the certainty of death there is no refuge; young and old, sick and healthy are here on a level and equally without escape. If there be any delusion, it lies not in framing a false supposition, but in studiously concealing an acknowledged truth; in shutting the eyes to a prospect which no delusion is powerful enough to move. This, indeed, is a practice but too common: and to counteract it is, in effect, what I have at present before me. I propose, then, to place death steadily before you, and to dwell upon it as a coming and certain event.

Of all future events, I believe it may be said with truth that death is the most certain. Indeed, what is its certainty but the infallibility of God himself? *It is decreed for all men once to die.* It does not happen by chance: it is not a mere contingency of nature; *it is decreed,* and therefore can no more fail than God himself can err. There are two general sentences, under the curse of which the unhappy sons of Adam are born into this world,—the sentence of sin and the sentence of death. Both are universal, but it is the latter only that is strictly and absolutely so. From the former there have been exceptions,—as Christ, our Redeemer, and his blessed Mother; he by right and essence, she by privilege: but the latter sentence has had no exceptions: it has passed on the Son of God himself.

It seems to have become an essential concomitant of our nature, and that nothing now can possibly be human without being mortal. Mortal, therefore, is our epithet, and it is perhaps the most proper, as it is the most comprehensive that we have. Accordingly, this circumstance of man's being is invariably the last that is recorded of him: it is the sad close of every human memorial. He lived—he lived so many years—and he died. No matter how long he lived,—seven, eight hundred, or a thousand years even, as our ancestors before the flood,—at last he died. Indeed so well understood is this general sentence, so hopeless the idea of any escape from it, that I

believe we may say man, however reluctantly, has made up his mind to it, and silently acquiesced in his inevitable doom. The delusion of living long is common enough; but the expectation of living for ever is an error, I believe, too gross ever yet to have entered the mind of any man.

Born under the mortal sentence, branded with it on his very entrance into being, man is not long before he learns the melancholy truth. It is one of his infantine lessons: and if he then but little understands its import, his own ocular experience soon explains to him what it means. He stands by the couch of some dying relative or companion, and how sad and painful is the sight! how poignant is the sensation, how strong the impression it makes on his youthful heart! What gives it, then, more than half its poignancy, is the secret sense that it is but an image of his own fate; it is the *answer of death* which he has within him that responds to the spectacle without, and with more than oracular certainty announces to him his own approaching and unavoidable destiny. As he advances in life, it is in vain for him to look around for any fence against the coming blow, for any refuge from the fatal sentence.

Even the human frame itself is a voucher for its own dissolution, and at its very birth has the germ of death planted within it. The process of death, I may say, begins with the play of life, and man is in a manner dying every day that he lives. The very nourishment which he takes to repair the wastes of his earthly tenement contributes in its manner to wear it away; the vital fire itself is corroding its walls, and the sanguine current which so regularly performs its mysterious round, is gradually wasting away its own slender channels, and secretly undermining the frail edifice to which it conveys nourishment.

Since then, my brethren, death is so certain, so inevitably certain, since it is so surely coming, and there is no hope or possibility of escape from it, let us for once weigh our own words, and see what it is that we mean when we say that we are certainly to die. I know it is usual to shrink from such a contemplation; but this is evidently neither wise, nor even rational. Could we shun the object by shunning the view of it, we might then, with more reason, humor our natural repugnance; but since such conduct can evidently have no other effect than to aggra-

vate the evil and to load its arrival with additional terrors, it becomes our duty, both as men and as Christians, to view it steadily beforehand, and to consider, at leisure, the import of our own confession on the subject.

You say, then, you readily admit that you are certainly to die. It is certain that you will die: that is to say, there is a day coming, inevitable, fixed,—yes, uncertain, if you please, on your side, but certain on the part of God, and already written down in his irreversible decrees,—a day it will be, like these common days that roll so unconcernedly over you; one of the days of one of the months of one of these years,—which to you will be the last of days. You will then take your leave for ever of this world, this busy and vain world, in which you have probably but too securely fixed your abode and entrenched your heart. You will no more inhale this vital air, no more see the cheerful sun; the night will never again draw its shades over you, nor the dawn reopen your eyelids. Your place will no longer be found, you will be entirely missed from the earth. Missed? you will make a momentary vacuum, which, alas! will soon be filled up. A few will observe, only a few feel your departure; those weeping friends and relatives that will then stand round your dying bed, embittering your distress by their own. To the rest of the world, that day, to you of such moment, will be of no particular account; they will just pay to your name the slightest tribute of a sigh, and then pursue, as usual, their business and their pleasures, heeding and remembering you no more than the listless spectator does the casual wave which he sees rise up for a moment on the bosom of the deep and then lie down again on the level surface.

You do not want proofs of what I have been saying; you see it verified with your own eyes; you yourselves exemplify it. How many there are among the dead, who were once your contemporaries; and how much do you now think about them? Go a little beyond them, and how many are there, whose very spoils you now wear, whose houses you inhabit, whose apartments you tenant, whose very spot in existence, I may say, you fill, and you do not even know their names! All this, then, remember, you predict for yourselves, when you say you are to die; death will certainly do as much for you. It will strike you,

not only out of existence, but out of memory; you will be to the world, as if you had never been; nor shall any thing that concerns you ever again move the lips, or stir the feelings of any mortal, till that great day when your name and your actions shall be read up to the universe. Such is one part of the meaning of the certainty of death.

Let us proceed. It is certain that you will die; that is to say, the stroke of death will reach your own person, the very body you now animate. For, I know not how it is, we seem as if we expected to die somehow in the person of another, so little do we enter into what we say; so feebly, so remotely do we apply it to its proper subject. Remember, then, for once, that when you say you are to die, it is your own self, that very frame you now animate that is to verify the words. It is those very limbs you have about you, those same arms you now move so freely, and make so promptly subservient to your wants, that, unnerved by the touch of death, will then lie weak and powerless by your side. Apply your hand, and feel how warm and vigorous the pulse of life plays within its secret chamber: that same breast will then be forsaken by its essential heat, and vibrate no more with the vital motion. It is that same tongue, now so much at your command, which answers so promptly all your thoughts and desires, that will then be parched up with mortal thirst, and cleave to the palate inarticulate and motionless. Those very eyes, with which you now view me, will then swim in the mist of death, and stand fixed and paralysed in their sockets. It is the same ears, with which you now so readily drink in my words, that are then to relax their fibres, and echo no more with the sounds of this world. Review the rest of your frame, and you will find, that you have actually about you the instruments of your own fate; it is in one or other of these organs, that you are to receive the stroke of death. They all stand open and vulnerable, waiting only the commission from above. Perhaps they do not even wait; perhaps you have already lodged within you, the seeds of that disease which is to be fatal to you; perhaps they only want a few days to develope themselves. Nothing is more common; the experience of life must have taught you that very frequently apparent health and vigor border close upon disease and death. This at least is

certain, that whoever you may be, or whatever your progress in life, Death has already his eye upon you, and has even fixed his unerring aim; and that your vital frame is not now more certainly in the possession of life, health and vigor, than it will be, one day, and that soon, lifeless, dissolved, and confounded absolutely with the vulgar mould on which you tread. Remember this, then, when you speak of your mortality.

But there is yet a third import of your words, more weighty than either of the preceding. It is certain that you will die; that is to say, you will one day come to that decisive point, which is to fix for ever your future destiny; that awful situation, in which every mortal must once, and can only once, stand, the most momentous that can possibly be his lot; on the dubious margin of eternity, his eyes fast closing on the dim scene which he leaves behind him, and opening on that vast immeasurable ocean before him.

You will see yourself just on the point of making that fearful transition, which has no prelude and no repeal, can neither be tried beforehand, nor repeated afterwards. In this life, you were ever changing; no part of your existence was permanent or stationary; then, you will see yourself on the verge of being fixed for ever; you will be within a few moments of an unalterable eternity; an eternity of what? of incalculable happiness or incalculable wo.

Were there more than two chances, were there several alternatives, the situation would not be half so terrible; but to be suspended between two opposite infinites, certain of one, but uncertain of which, is the most awful situation that can possibly be conceived! Well, this will be yours in death, infallibly. You mean it, when you say you shall die.

Awful, however, as the situation is, it will not be of long delay; the transition will be soon made; and while your friends are watching round you, weeping over you, and calling aloud on your name in the agony of their distress, as if they would detain your struggling spirit, in a moment it has slipped away from them; you are no longer there; you have passed the eternal gates, and are become an inhabitant of another world! And oh! my friends, what shall be your impressions at that awful moment? what shall you then see, what shall you hear,

what shall you feel? Doubtless you will start as from a dream; your soul will break in an instant from the shadows of the earth, and find itself in a blaze of light! That is to say, you will be instantly in the presence of God: that Great Being, whom, in this world, you saw not, felt not, and therefore perhaps heeded not, will in that instant be visible to you in all his majesty! And in what capacity? As your judge. You will find yourself instantaneously at his dread tribunal; the first object, that you will see, will be the tablet of your life minutely drawn up, time, place, circumstance,—all clear, all incontestible: and underneath, couched in one word, the momentous sentence,—Hell, or Heaven.

The execution will be simultaneous; and, in less than one instant from your departure out of the body, you are fixed in an eternity of wo, or an eternity of bliss, with the immutability of God himself for the seal of your destiny! Ah! my brethren, did you think that this was the import of your words, when you acknowledged you were to die? Yet you know they imply all this; you know I have added nothing to them; I have only expanded their meaning.

It would seem, that a coming event, so interesting, so awful, and at the same time so certain, should engross the whole attention of the rational being whom it concerned; should fill his thoughts and absorb his cares. I need not say how far this is from being the case. The truth is, that men, unable to blind themselves to the prospect, take refuge from the certainty of the event in its uncertainty; that is to say, they heed and feel it not, because the time of its accomplishment is perhaps remote, and certainly undefined. I will briefly consider these two cases, and then conclude.

First: The time is perhaps remote. But there are many here present, to whom, in the natural course of things, this chance cannot extend; many, to whom the better half of their days is already past; who have visibly turned the summit of life's hill, and are already in the downward path, from which the dark valley of death begins to be plain and conspicuous, and who are secretly warned, by their decaying organs and commencing infirmities, they will not travel much further.

But to say nothing of this, and to give the event every advan-

tage in point of distance, what does its utmost latitude amount to? Twenty, thirty, or perhaps fifty years; and what are these to a forecasting being? If they appear something in prospect, view them in retrospect; examine them by the past: I know no better criterion. What are now those several thirty or forty years, which were once before you, and are now thrown behind you? They appeared long then; what are they now? Dwindled to a point; they have scarcely marked a trace on the memory. The years to come are of the same nature; their other extremity, though indistinct to your eye, is not undefined nor unfixed; while you, on your part, are continually hastening along, taking silently but rapidly year from year, till at last, while intent on the objects around you, you will startle to find yourself at the extremity which now seems so distant.

You can, at will, conceive this; imagination has that power over the future, which memory has over the past; let it transport you, then, to the spot,—supposing the intervening years past,—and you are immediately in the case we have been considering, and all the fearful realities of death fall upon you, just as certainly, as if they were this moment to occur, only perhaps with the greater weight from the longer delay.

Secondly: If the time is only perhaps remote, it is certainly undefined. Yes, but is this a motive of security to a rational being? is it not rather the very ground of fear? For what does it mean? It means, that there is not a single moment of life, in any stage of it, but may be the last; that any one of these instants, as it passes, may bring along with it death, and all that we have said of death.

Is youth any security? It is well known that its impetuosity and its passions fill it with dangers, and that both moral and physical causes combine to render it, next to decrepitude itself, the most mortal period of life. You, my young friends, have here many silent monitors how deceitful is the promise of youth. You pass and repass over their graves; but do you often reflect that a very short interval may annex you to their number! Is middle age better guaranteed? Its full expanded frame, its more regular habits, its settled maturity, seem to promise better things, and do indeed diminish its risks; but death has, here too, frequent victims, and we have seen of late more than one

striking instance, where middle age, uninterrupted health, and a frame yet green and vigorous, were no security, but emphatically proved to us that there is absolutely no period of life that does not verge on the grave, no moment of time that does not hang upon eternity.

Putting then, together, my brethren, these three points,—that death is certain and inevitable, that its consequences are most momentous, and that they may be all realized at any single moment;—what is the plain inference that we must draw? Evidently this, that it should be the great business of life to prepare for death. This, I know, is not the language of the world, but it is the language of religion, and the dictate of wisdom, and even of plain reason.

Far be it from me to wish to tie down the mind constantly to so severe a subject; this is as unnecessary, as it would be impracticable; but it is in every one's power, and is certainly the duty of every one who has the least regard for his own interest; at least, not to shun the serious reflection; to let it terminate all his views, and have a part in all his calculations; to oppose its salutary influence to the allurements of passion, and the seductions of vanity; and to make it, on occasions at least, a deliberate and studied subject, particularly then, when it so naturally presents itself, at the close of the day, when he regularly sinks into that state, which is so striking an image of death, and not unfrequently the sudden transition to it.

No reasonable being can fear, from such conduct, any disturbance of his real happiness; it has been the practice of the wisest and best of men; it made their lives holy and their deaths happy; and is the only means of securing to you the same blessing.

Sermon XV.

Septuagesima Sunday.

ON HEAVEN.

Every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one.—1 Cor. ix. 25.

It is the great advantage of religion, that it carries the views of man beyond the tomb. Taught by its all-cheering voice, he finds, that the dissolution of this mortal frame is but the commencement of a new life; that, while the rest of the animal creation, when their vital functions cease, sink into their original nothing, he himself is destined to flourish in immortality: that the knell which proclaims the close of his mortal day, is, if he himself oppose not his own destiny, only the signal of a brighter dawn; and that the coffin and the shroud, which shall encompass his frame, are but the cradle and the swathing-bands of a new and second birth.

Full of such a hope, it would seem natural, that he should make the scenes of this hereafter, the frequent subject of his anticipations; that, in comparison, the visionary objects of time should fade upon his eye, its sweetest pleasures pall upon his sense; that the thought of heaven should become his unfading source of comfort in distress, his constant refuge in temptation; at least, that, like the traveller, who is preparing to go to a distant land, he should inform himself of the nature of the country, wherein he is going to enter and to dwell.

Nothing, however, is farther from fact: unaccountable as it may appear, perhaps no subject less occupies man's attention, than that which is most worthy of it.

The petty agitations of time, the passing occurrences of the hour, find a ready entrance into his ear and heart. Speak to him of immortality, of the glorious destiny that awaits him; the subject interests him not; it is listened to with reluctance. Such, in a word, is his insensibility with regard to his future state of existence, that the belief of it would hardly seem a portion of his creed. To rescue, then, so important a subject from its unmerited oblivion, is the end which I this day propose. I will endeavor to show, that, of all the objects which can engage the attention of man, heaven is the most worthy of his solicitude and pursuit.

One reflection, however, there is, which it will be proper to premise, that, much as we may say of heaven, our expressions and ideas must necessarily fall infinitely short of the reality; and that its joys can then only be duly appreciated when they come to be possessed. St. Augustine, whose sublime genius often led him into the most exalted disquisitions on the nature of the divine attributes and perfections, and who successfully carried his researches into the most obscure topics of metaphysical inquiry, thus expresses himself: *Heaven may be desired, it may be the object of our hopes and of our sighs: adequately conceived or described in words, it cannot be.* Therefore, without attempting minutely to describe that, in which description must necessarily fail, I will confine my reflections to some of the circumstances attendant on the joys of heaven, and will proceed to consider them under three heads. First, inasmuch as they are *real* and *solid;* secondly, as they are *unmixed with any alloy of evil;* and, thirdly, as they are *eternal.*

First, then, the joys of heaven are *real and solid* joys; unlike those of earth, which constitute rather the shadow, the phantom of happiness, than happiness itself. These, however glittering and seductive the garb which they assume, bring with them nothing better than real misery.

Beholding them, indeed, at a distance, we are led to believe that the acquisition of them will quiet all our longings, and satisfy every restless wish. Do we attain them?—that instant the charm is dissipated, the deception is discovered, and we are left empty and unsatisfied as before. Thus it happens that the life of the children of this world is usually nothing but a con-

tinued round of desire and disappointment, of impatient wishes and frustrated hopes; all their days pass in pursuing that which flees from them, and in fleeing from that which they have attained; in quitting one project for another, one good which they have found to be fallacious for another which is yet untried. And whence is this? It is, fellow-christians, because the heart of man is created with a capacity for happiness which the whole world is inadequate to fill. It is because it is here in a state of sojournment and trial, a state in which it can never be satiated in its longings.

Far different its situation when placed in its true, its celestial country. There too it can never cease to desire; yet there all its desires are satiated as soon as formed, nay, prevented and absorbed by incessant fruition. There God himself exerts his omnipotence in filling its capacity. Infinite as he is in all his attributes, his bounty and goodness in the distribution of his favors surpass all his works. In giving himself, he gives to the heart every good that it is possible for it to conceive or desire.

Whatever power of imparting delight is found in any of his creatures, whatever excellence is observable in the natural or moral world, all are emanations of that sovereign perfection which centres in him. From him all perfections originate, all beauty flows. In God, then, the elect feel every desirable emotion, every pleasure, every delight, every rapture which the heart of man is capable of containing. But when I say "the heart of man," think not, my brethren, I mean to measure the joys of heaven by the limited power which man here possesses of enjoyment. Here, indeed, occupied with one species of pleasure, he is often rendered incapable of enjoying another. The man of wealth, by a slavish love for the riches which he holds, is prevented from enjoying the pleasures he might purchase; the votary of ambition, while engaged in the struggles and agitation of public life, is a stranger to the peaceful joys of privacy and retirement. In the life to come, on the contrary, the hearts of the blessed are dilated and enlarged to a degree commensurate with every united species of enjoyment. Immersed in the ocean of all delights, they seem to lay aside their own nature and assume that of the Divinity itself. *We know that when he shall appear,*

says St. John, *we shall be like to him.* Hence holy David, speaking of the celestial Jerusalem, employs this emphatic language: *O how hast thou multiplied thy mercy, O God: the children of men shall put their trust under the covert of thy wings. They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure, for with thee there is the fountain of life, and in thy light they shall see light.*

Of all the feelings to which the human soul is subject, by far the most violent is that of love; the most pleasurable and enchanting when it meets with a return; the most painful and distressing when it is disappointed and unrepaired. Created for love, man is ever unconsciously occupied in the exercise of this restless faculty; called to the single love of infinite perfection, his heart in vain runs to terrestrial objects in search of repose.

The love of riches in the avaricious man, the love of honors in the man of ambition, the love of self in the proud man, what are they but the wanderings of a heart mistaken in its object, yet thirsting for a good, which may render it happy and repay its affections? Hence, to the man, who, undeceived as to all the fallacious goods and pleasures of the world, directs his affections aright, how ravishing must be that moment, when he finds his heart completely filled, enraptured and lost, in the unalterable possession of the object of its longings. When the clouds and storms that troubled the night of his mortal existence have passed away, when all the illusions of sense are dissipated, all the deceitful attractions and insidious invitations of worldly felicity are no longer feared; then, with what delight does his pure soul give itself up to all the ardor of its natural, its primary attraction! to behold, in the broad daylight of eternity, unveiled, unobscured, all the beauty and attractions of that divine object, which, even when beheld through the obscurity of this present life, had appeared infinitely superior to every temporal beauty and perfection! To find the tongues of all the countless myriads of the heavenly host perpetually employed in canticles of praise and adoration to his beloved! To find the weaknesses and imperfections of mortality exchanged for the abundant effusions of strength and knowledge which issue from the bosom of the Divinity! To find his love repaid with love, to find the little sacrifices, the momentary tribulations of this

present life, rewarded above measure with an exceeding weight of glory!

Ah! my brethren, much do I apprehend, that the language which I am now employing, is a language unintelligible to the far greater part of Christians. Confined as their views are within the narrow sphere of earthly gratifications, they have not felt, and consequently cannot know, what it is to love, what to enjoy God. To know what heaven is, even imperfectly, it is necessary to have the burning charity of a Paul, of a Francis, of a Theresa.

Approach, then, these angels of the earth, these seraphic victims of love; approach and interrogate them, as to what they have felt and experienced. Their bodies, indeed, are emaciated with austerities, their eyes dim with watching and with tears; yet their souls, overwhelmed in delights, are insensible to every impression, impervious to every feeling, regardless of every object, but the infinite good, which fills and absorbs them.

A St. Paul, consumed with the painful labors of his apostleship, persecuted and imprisoned, yet rejoicing in his chains! a Xavier, traversing alone the inhospitable and unconverted regions of the East, yet exclaiming, in the overflowings of his joy, *Enough, O Lord! it is enough!* Behold, my brethren, the testimony of men, whose depositions on such a subject cannot be called in question.

Yet, what is it that they have beheld,—what is it that they have experienced? A glimpse of that blaze of glory which is to invest them in heaven. Yet, assemble all that the world possesses of magnificent or attracting; call up, in imagination, all the riches which the wealthiest have ever coveted or possessed, all the honors which the most ambitious have ever obtained or sought; all the pleasures which the world has ever bestowed or promised;—and place the collection of all these,—I do not say in comparison with the joys of the blessed—the comparison would be too degrading,—but compare them with the consolations which God sometimes here upon earth bestows upon his servants.

The whole collected sum of worldly felicity totally disappears, or rather becomes an object of disgust and abhorrence, to him whom God rewards. Hence, if in this place of banishment, such be the ineffable delights experienced by the favorites of heaven,

it may fairly be inferred, that the joys prepared for them hereafter, are real and solid, in a degree surpassing all conception or expression; solid in comparison with every other species of enjoyment, because they fill and satiate the heart of man; solid in themselves, because they consist in the possession of him, who is the source of all delight.

The next quality which I pointed out in the joys of heaven, is that they are *unalloyed* with any the least degree of evil. In this world, the most envied felicity is subject to many miseries. *What is man upon earth?* asks holy Job. While to render him happy, the world, with all it contains, is insufficient; to render him miserable, nothing is required beyond himself. Within his own heart, he possesses a never-failing source of misery in the conflicting passions and desires to which he is subject. The indulgence of them cannot give happiness; restraint will not insure security or repose. If, to the evils which originate in his own breast, we add the external miseries by which he is surrounded, the treachery of friends, the violence of enemies, the various accidents to which his fortune, his reputation, and his very life are on all sides exposed, the pangs of disease, which he may at any moment experience, and death itself, which sooner or later must crown his woes, we cannot be surprised, that Solomon, as well as Job, should have exclaimed, *I am weary of my life.* Hence, were we to form our estimate of heaven, merely by the evils from which it freed us, how desirable must the possession of it appear. O you! who suffer under the evils of life, (and where is he who feels them not?) turn then your eyes towards the celestial Jerusalem. There, and there only, shall you find an abode freed from all sorrow, an asylum from all the miseries which now surround you. *And God,* says St. John, *shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow, shall be any more.* Yes, Christians! perpetual joy, unalterable peace and tranquillity, surround the ramparts of that heavenly city. *He hath blessed thy children within thee, he hath placed peace in thy borders.*

The source of sorrow and of tears is dried up, never, never more to flow. Here it is decreed for all men once to die; there it is decreed that they shall die no more. The bodies of the

elect, become now immortal and impassible, flourish in perpetual vigor, youth, and splendor. Their hearts, satiated and contented, are no longer a prey to the chagrins, the disappointments, the vicissitudes, which occasionally embitter the felicity of those who are deemed the most happy on earth.

A day of uninterrupted splendor and calm illumines the courts of the heavenly Sion; the darkness of night overshadows it not, no cloud obscures the beauty of its sun. *For the glory of God*, says St. John, *hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.* Even the just man, here upon earth, knows not whether he is worthy of love or hatred: hence the peace and the joy which follow the practice of virtue itself, in comparison of which all other joys are unworthy the appellation, are necessarily imperfect. The idea that all the store of merit which he has with so much assiduity acquired, that the rewards of so many victories which he has gained, may be forfeited by a single act of disobedience; that he is surrounded with dangers and enemies; and that fresh labors must be undergone, fresh obstacles surmounted, before he can be secure of his reward; such a reflection cannot fail to fill the soul, even of the virtuous man, with anxiety and solicitude. Different is the situation of the inhabitants of heaven. All their fears are now at an end; they know that they love God, and are beloved by him; that they possess the sovereign Good: no more trials, no more dangers, no more temptations; nothing to be feared from the importunities of the flesh, the snares of the devil, the seductions of the world; nothing from the malevolence of the envious, the hostility of the wicked.

United in the incessant love of the same divine object, the blessed above realize the scene pictured to himself by holy David, when he exclaimed, *Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.* The cold words, *mine* and *thine*, according to the beautiful expression of St. Chrysostom, the occasion of so many contentions and wars among men, are unknown there. Hence, while on earth many are often impoverished for a few to become rich,—and for one to attain a false happiness, thousands are plunged into real misery; in heaven, the felicity of each one of the elect is heightened and multiplied by the happiness of the rest.

The inheritance which they receive possesses the property of infinitude, and is not lessened by being shared and divided. Like the light of the sun, which is not diminished to any by the numbers that enjoy it, and which is possessed by all, envied and contended for by none, the happiness of heaven is a happiness of perfect peace and content, as universal in its extent as it is in its intensity.

Having thus seen that the joys of heaven, in whatever light they are considered, admit not the least mixture of evil; that all the sources of human misery are entirely excluded from that blessed abode; that all the passions which here harass and afflict us are there purified and directed towards their proper object; in a word, that nothing can affect *him* by whom the source of all joy is possessed, I will proceed to the last circumstance in relation to the joys of heaven to which I called your attention, which is, that they are to be *eternal.*

The holy patriarch Jacob, when asked by Pharaoh to inform him of his age, made answer: *The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years, few and evil.* Behold, my brethren, in two words, the general epitome of the days of man. *Few and evil!* A reflection this, which with equal truth might be made on the wealthy and the indigent, on the most successful as on the most unfortunate, on the hoary survivor of a century as on him who falls in the bloom of life; of all may it be pronounced that the days of their pilgrimage are *few and evil.*

To those whose affections are centred in temporal objects, the one is a necessary consequence of the other. The days that are few will of necessity be evil. For where the time allotted for the enjoyment of that which is loved is ever on the decrease, where its total loss is perpetually feared, there, certainly, no real happiness can be found.

The greater our fondness for any object, the keener is our affliction when it is taken away. Now what is the sublunary possession of which we may not be deprived by a thousand accidents? Even if the tenure were more certain, if we could insure ourselves the possession of every earthly advantage to our latest breath, still the moment must inevitably come when we must bid them a last adieu. *It is a condition attached to all temporal possessions,* says St. Augustine, *that they either quit us or are quitted by us.*

Hence arises that dread at the thought of death, that fear of looking into futurity, which is so common in the world; all things recall the thought, yet every subterfuge is employed to banish it, because the intrusion of such a thought is alone sufficient to embitter the sweetest joys, and overcloud the brightest scenes.

From the consideration of time let us turn to that of eternity.

If the damned in hell could hope ever to see an end of their torments, hell would cease to be hell; if the blessed in heaven could for a moment apprehend the loss of the joys which they possess, such an apprehension would render them more miserable than all the bliss which they experience could render them happy. Their felicity, great as it is, would that moment cease to be unalloyed, it would cease to be solid, it would cease to be infinite. To be eternal, then, is a necessary condition of the joys of heaven. But what is eternity? The term, fellow-christians, is one with which all are acquainted: its import has never yet been fathomed by mortal mind. How then shall I describe to you what is meant when it is said that the joys of the elect are to be eternal.

Shall I bid you behold the fathomless ocean, and measure the drops which compose its immensity, or count the sands which from east to west, from the frozen pole to the burning equator, lie on its extended shores? Easier would the computation be made than that of the revolutions of the eternal years. Shall I call in to my assistance the science of numbers, and bid the mathematician have recourse to his highest powers of calculation? Let him be exclusively employed in the computation, let instants be deemed ages, and ages be considered millions of years, his life shall be spent in the task, earth shall he covered with the numbers which he shall have employed, eternity will be still unfathomed. Shall I say more? Yes, as long as God shall be God; as long as he shall continue to be the author of that which he has already done, so long shall the blessed retain possession of their felicity. The joys of the elect, then, are never to end. But this is not all; they are always commencing. It is essential to eternal fruition that the vivacity of its first raptures should always continue: that it should always be new, and never cloy. After millions of ages spent in the incessant contemplation of the Divinity, the blessed shall find in God fresh sources of

delight, fresh motives of admiration,—in themselves, fresh ardor of affection, fresh eagerness for enjoyment.

He that eateth me, says our Divine Redeemer, *shall yet hunger; he that drinketh me, shall yet thirst.* Yes! the torrents of delight which inundate the souls of the blessed, so far from checking or cooling the ardor of their charity, only increase and inflame it. Ever thirsting, they shall be for ever filled; every increase of joy shall be an increase of desire,—every increase of desire shall be satisfied.

Thus, fellow-christians, have I endeavored to lay before you some of the characters of that felicity which is enjoyed by the blessed in heaven. Imperfect as the sketch has been, it will be at least sufficient to show that the joys of the life to come infinitely surpass all that can possibly be found in this; that they are worth all the labor and solicitude which can be bestowed upon them; that nothing can equal them if attained, nothing compensate for them if lost.

To the possession of these enjoyments we are all individually called; it is the only end for which we were created, the only end for which we exist. The loss or acquisition of them is yet in our choice; a few more years, perhaps days, and it will be so no more. Those who have attained them, were once men like ourselves, surrounded with as great, perhaps greater difficulties; subject to the same weaknesses, the same dangers, the same temptations. They labored for a moment, and are happy for eternity: they fought the good fight, and are now in possession of the crown of justice. What is our conduct? We have the same hopes, the same proposed reward. But have we the same fervor, the same earnestness? Do we, like them, make heaven the object of our concern, of our solicitude, of our sighs?

Heaven, we know, is to be taken by violence, and none but those who use violence can bear it away. Do we act up to our conviction? We know that we have not here a lasting city, yet are not our principal efforts directed to the earth?

Ah, Christians, were you to regulate your exertions for the attainment of celestial happiness by those which you exhibit in the pursuit of perishable goods, how confidently might you look forward to the result.

The world which you serve is a hard master. Yourselves

know it, you acknowledge it. It demands from you the greatest sacrifices, and only promises uncertain and perishable goods, *a corruptible crown.* God, at a less price, insures you a certain and an infinite reward—*a crown incorruptible.* The former has hitherto always deceived you: for once, then, make the experiment of the latter. The trial can expose you to no risk. He, who is omnipotent, and who cannot deceive, has promised to assist as well as to reward your efforts.

Sermon XIX.

Sexagesima Sunday.

DEATH OF THE JUST.

Amen, Amen, I say to you, if any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever.—JOHN viii. 51.

THESE words of our Saviour appear, at first sight, paradoxical; for it is certain, that, notwithstanding the world's redemption, all the sons of Adam, without exception, still pay the common debt of nature. But, if we consider the true import of the threat, wherewith the Almighty accompanied his charge to our first parents, the difficulty will vanish. *In whatsoever hour*, says he, *thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.* Thus, a punishment infinitely more tremendous than the separation of the soul from the body, was incurred by man, when he transgressed the commands of his Creator. He was condemned, not merely to die, but to *die the death.*

Now, the passage of the immaterial portion of our being from this to another and a better world, and a temporary suspension of the animal functions, with a right to their improved renewal, is not death, but new life to the soul, and only a species of sleep to the body.

Such is the death of those, who have kept the words of Christ; and therefore, as he promises, Christians of this description taste not death. It was to purchase for them this kind of termination of their present mode of existence, instead of death in its original and terrific nature, that Christ paid the price of his blood; while to the wicked, who keep not the words of Christ, the dreadful sentence pronounced against Adam, still retains its unqualified meaning. They still *die the death:* nay,

the same Redeemer, who has conquered the sable tyrant in favor of his obedient children, gives him fresh arms, and arrays him with new terrors, to punish the ungrateful and rebellious. These still feel, in their last moments, how bitter is that cup which divine justice mingled for fallen man, whilst the virtuous, at their exit from this world, triumphantly exclain, *O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!*

Death is truly bitter to the sinner in his expiring moments, because he is then torn from all that he values and loves, and consigned to whatever he dreads and abhors. After existing for a moment, he then passes into worse than non-existence for eternity. The idea of annihilation would cheer him, and the gloomy mansion of the tomb, could it be his everlasting abode, would suggest at least one composing reflection, and afford some compensation, in rest and peace, for his tumultuous and unsatisfactory enjoyments during life. But no! he must not rest: he must die! and die the death! Ah, how precious, on the contrary, in the sight of God, is the death of his saints. *For blessed are the dead who die in the Lord! from henceforth, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow them.*

But, to pursue the comparison between these two species of death, through all the details of the frightful end of the wicked and the consoling end of the good, would lead me beyond the limits of a single discourse. Therefore, leaving the former to a future day, I shall place before your eyes the edifying spectacle of a just man, who has finished his course, and is taking his departure from this world. I hope to make it clear, that he fully verifies my text: *If any man keep my word, he shall not see death for ever.* The consolations which he enjoys in his last moments, and which completely destroy the sting of death, are derived from his prospects, his virtues, his retrospects, and the institutions of religion: and it is to the just man, as thus consoled on his death-bed, I now request your serious attention.

Our present state, we all know, is but temporary; and we are placed in it by our Creator as in a journey which conducts to another. That future state is always before the eyes of the wise Christian, who, *remembering his latter end, to it directs every thing.* The various transactions of this world, however

important in the opinion of others, he views as trifles; and nothing deeply interests him but what is connected with eternity. Hence, whilst worldlings, like the Egyptians of old, are involved in the darkness of a thousand erroneous notions, he, like the Israelites in the land of Gessen, walks in the daylight of truth. How different his view of the great benefit of redemption, from that taken by the greater part of Christians! He not only accepts, but loves the conditions under which it is tendered to us; and, if I may be allowed to say so, would reject a salvation which could be obtained without obedience to God. The yoke of his divine Saviour, so far from appearing a badge of slavery, is in his eyes the charter of real liberty; and his burden a proof of infinite love in this amiable Master, who thus condescends to be served by worms like us.

With these ideas of the world in which he lives, and with these feelings respecting the duties imposed on him by his Saviour, the good Christian journeys on in his mortal pilgrimage, till at length he comes in view of his heavenly country. In other words, death now approaches him, and warns him to prepare for his passage into eternity. Let us, my brethren, draw near the interesting scene, as witnesses to this interview. If we have the happiness of being engaged fervently in the service of God, we shall derive from this sight new ardor in the pursuit of virtue: if, on the contrary, we be in the case of those who keep not the words of Christ, we shall, I hope, take occasion from the just man's exit, to change our conduct; that the same happy lot may one day become our own. Death must visit us all, and every one here present will, a short time hence, either have felt a truly mortal blow from him, in the execution of God's justice, or have been visited by him as a messenger of mercy, to call him to real and never-ending life. How cheering is Christianity! And how justly is it entitled the Gospel, or glad tidings to the world! But if Christianity be consoling to the good man at all times, it is particularly so, at the hour of death, when all those circumstances, which are so sickening and appalling to the dying infidel, are, on the contrary, to the pious Christian, the sources of inexpressible comfort. He is struck by a mortal infirmity, and sees the grave open to receive him! But, with holy Job, *he knows his Redeemer liveth, and in the last day he*

shall rise out of the earth, and shall be clothed again with his skin, and in his flesh he shall see his God.

The death of the body, then, he considers as the dissolution of a temporary house of clay; and he feasts his eye on the prospect of that glorious habitation, which is to succeed it, eternal in the heavens. His present body he always viewed as the prison of the soul, by which her sight was obstructed, her energies constrained, her activity prevented from exercise. But the moment has arrived, when this immaterial substance is to be set free, and her god-like powers are to expand in all their native perfection. Ah! with what raptures does he look forward towards those unbounded fields of knowledge and love, into which he is about to enter! and how does he triumph in the breaking down of those prison walls, which have hitherto detained him in comparative darkness and ignorance! But his body was not only a prison, which impeded the soul in her operations; it was also to him a source of perpetual conflict and danger. It was by far the most powerful of all his enemies, and he could expect no happiness or repose, as long as he was united to it. Shall he then grieve, when this enemy is for ever to leave him; or rather, shall he not exult in the thought of being separated from such a *body of death?* Even the sufferings which usually attend our dying moments, are, to the just man, a source of consolation. Here principally is seen the triumph of virtue over vice, of Christianity over infidelity.

Born with the same passions, which cause such discord in the breasts of the impious, the pious Christian has made it the business of his life to attune to reason and religion these naturally jarring chords; and the result of his efforts is, that all is harmony within him. His understanding he has regulated by the light of faith; his will, with all her affections, he has subjected to his Creator. No object was cherished by him, but what he identified with some or other of the divine perfections. Nothing was odious to him, but what he judged to be deformed in the eye of the Sovereign Truth. All the events of life he viewed as so many determinations of the divine will; and, whether they were sweet or bitter to his natural appetites, he acquiesced in them, as the effects of infinite wisdom and infinite love. Consequently, prosperity or adversity, riches or poverty,

health with all her smiling train, or sickness with her concomitant evils, were equally acceptable to him. God, God alone, he viewed and loved in all things. And shall not he view and love God in the pains and other afflictions of his last illness? Yes, they are the actions of his God; therefore they are welcome to him: they proceed from infinite wisdom and infinite love; therefore he approves of and loves them. In them he recognises the same divine hand, which, having sweetly conducted him hitherto on his road towards his heavenly country, is now forcing him through the last narrow pass which lies on its confines. Oh how lovely does this sacred hand appear to him! How does he kiss it! and how thankfully does he accept the friendly office it is now performing! Moreover the pains which he now endures, are not novel to him. They have long been familiar to his mind, dear to his heart. They form the portion which he has always chosen. As a true Christian, he took up his cross and followed his Saviour. He gloried in this badge of his profession, this standard of his warfare. Seeing his leader set him the example of a life of sorrow and a death of pain, he spurned all ideas of sensual enjoyments, and had no other ambition than to live and die like his Lord. Ah! sweet cross, he now exclaims, in thy embraces I have lived, in thy embraces I desire to die! Ah! sweet cross! thou choicest gift of heaven! thou pledge of predestination! a thousand times I welcome thee! A thousand times I bless my Saviour for laying thee upon me, and enabling me to carry thee to the end. Thus, while the impious writhe indignant under the scourge, the just man submits to his afflictions, not only with patience, but even with joy.

Another source of sweetest comfort to the just man in his dying moments, is the retrospect into a well-spent life. *They that sow in tears*, says the Holy Scriptures, *shall reap in joy. Going, they went and wept casting their seeds. But coming, they shall come with joyfulness carrying their sheaves.* The just man has been, not in name only, but in reality a servant of his God. To him he has consecrated every member of his body, every power of his soul. The talents intrusted to his management he has faithfully multiplied, and the task assigned him in the vineyard he has completed with care. Already, therefore, he hears the sweet voice of his generous master sound-

ing in his ears: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* A soldier in a spiritual and arduous warfare, he has braved every fatigue and danger in the service of his King; and he has valiantly fought his battles against the devil, the world, and the flesh. True to his colors, he has constantly resisted the violence which would overcome, and the artifice, which would seduce his allegiance to his Sovereign. With St. Paul, then, he says, *I have fought the good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; as to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord will render to me at that day.* How pleasing will it be to the veteran soldier of Christ, to sit down at the end of his campaign, and run over in imagination all its various incidents and dangers! From the dawn of reason to the evening of life, at which he has now arrived, he has been in an uninterrupted conflict with innumerable foes. His spiritual life has been a thousand times in imminent danger: a thousand times, *by one pace only* have eternal death and he been separated. But he has escaped; he has triumphed: and laden with trophies he now stands on the frontier of that kingdom for which he has been struggling, and is going to give the last blow to the enfeebled and despairing enemy. With what feelings, then, of self-congratulation and of gratitude to God does he exclaim, with St. Paul: *Thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ:* and with holy David, *our soul hath passed through a torrent; perhaps our soul hath passed through a water insupportable. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us to be a prey to their teeth. Our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the net of the fowlers. The snare is broken and we are delivered. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

These emotions will not be appreciated by the carnal-minded, whose eyes of faith are nearly blinded by their passions, and who judge of the importance of objects by a reference to the erroneous standard of human wisdom. In their eyes, spiritual dangers are not awful; and spiritual death is devoid of terror. Habitual slaves of Satan, they have in practice ceased to consider him an enemy, and all his black arts of ruin appear so

many means of bliss. But he, on whom revelation has made a due impression; who is working out his salvation with fear and trembling; who daily shudders at the reflection, that after all his past firmness he may still fall, after all his past victories, still surprised and overcome; in a word, he who has formed a correct idea of the value of final perseverance, will easily conceive the joy of that pious Christian who at length sees his warfare nearly over, and the high prize for which he has been fighting within his grasp. I am aware, that with the various recollections which soothe the just man in his last moments, there are others which may seem to have a contrary tendency. An animated faith like his takes an enlightened view of the attributes of the Deity, and in particular the sanctity of God stands half revealed before him. On the other hand, he has a most lively sense of the deformity of sin, and knows that he is a sinner, nay, perhaps remembers that at some period or other in his life he has been polluted even by mortal sin. Shall he not, then, tremble at the idea of appearing before Him in whose presence the very angels are not pure? Yes! Christians, he does tremble; and, impressed with the greatest awe, shrinks into the deepest abyss of his sinfulness and nothingness before the majesty and sanctity of the Lord. But, my brethren, imagine not that this fear disturbs and afflicts him, or that it bears any resemblance to those alarms which are excited by natural causes, and are grounded on human motives. No! This is the fear of God, a gift of the Holy Ghost, who, whilst he inflicts a wound on the penitent heart, pours into it at the same instant a balsam which sweetly soothes and heals it.

He is a sinner: but the sighs he has poured forth, the tears he has encouraged to flow for his offences, have elicited from his Saviour those consoling words, *Son, be of good courage, thy sins are forgiven thee*—words which have long been heard in his interior, but which echo there in his dying moments with peculiar distinctness and suavity. He is a sinner—but has he not a Saviour? Has not this Saviour died for his sins? Has he not made a satisfaction for them adequate to the crimes of a thousand worlds? Is not this Saviour the vivifying principle of his soul? and have not all his good works been done, all his triumphs achieved, in and by this Saviour? Ah! here, then,

is the real source of all that peace which smiles over his parting hour: here the Rock on which he takes his stand; and the remembrances of his sins, the consciousness of his own spiritual miseries, as they teach him to rely wholly and absolutely on the merits and satisfaction of his Saviour, only tend to strengthen his hopes and increase his consolations. *In peace, in the self-same, I will sleep and will rest*, he cries out, *for thou, O Jesus, singularly hast settled me in hope.* Thus, my brethren, *to them that love God*, as St. Paul says, *all things work together unto good to such as, according to his purpose, are called to be saints:* and thus is verified in the just man, at his last hour, that prophetic benediction of David, *The Lord helps him on his bed of sorrow; thou hast turned all his couch for him.* Yes, thus does an invisible hand take from his cross its weight, and turn the thorns of his afflictions into roses.

And now the minister of God approaches his couch, to inform him that the holy rites are about to be administered, which at once announce and prepare for eternity. I need not say, that the cautious advance, the ambiguous intimation, the studied phrase, so customary, when a similar message is to be delivered to the worldling, are here unnecessery. The sacred visitant feels himself completely at his ease, and communicates the intelligence with the feelings of one who invites to an entertainment, or gives news of a prize. The dying man had ever loved and honored the ministers of religion, and never felt more solid comfort than in their company: and now they appear to him like guardian angels, who step in to support him in his last conflict; and to concur with him to a victory, which is to insure his happiness for ever. His animated faith sees spiritual objects in their true nature: and he is impressed by them, as if he no longer beheld them in an enigma, and through a glass. How beautiful, in his eyes, are all the ceremonies of religion; and in particular, how venerable are all those institutions to which Christ has annexed the promise of grace! But, above all, with what feelings of admiration, respect and love, does he contemplate that wonderful mystery, wherein he discerns the body and blood of the Lord! This heavenly Bread was his principal nourishment, during his journey through the wilderness of this world; and whilst to those, who longed for the flesh-pots of

Egypt, it was insipid, or even disgusting, to him who sighed only for the land of promise, it conveyed the varied taste of every delicious viand. Here was the centre of his affections: here the object, on which alone he could repose. Here had he been accustomed *to taste and see how sweet is the Lord.* It was hence he derived comfort in his afflictions; light in his obscurities; strength in his labors; courage, vigor, and arms in his warfare. Judge, then, my brethren, how he is affected by the approach of this holy sacrament to his dying couch. For, though his journey is concluding, he has still one arduous step to take; and; though his warfare is nearly over, he has still one important battle to fight. With what joy, then does, he hail the arrival of this heavenly succor, and what assurance does it give him of a happy termination of his labors, and a final victory over all his enemies! But with what sentiments of humility and love does he prepare himself to receive his Lord! With the eye of faith brightening, as his heart becomes more purified in the crucible of afflictions, he looks into the abyss of his own sinful nothingness on the one hand, and on the immeasurable expanse of the infinite majesty and sanctity of God on the other, and is overwhelmed with confusion, at the idea of a personal visit from Jesus Christ. But how is this same eye of faith struck with the goodness, which can induce such majesty, such sanctity, to notice a being like him. But, why should I say notice him? To love him, to become himself a nothing for his sake; to die for him, and to feed him with his sacred flesh and blood! This view of our Saviour Jesus Christ in the holy sacrament operates powerfully on his heart, and excites in it emotions, which may be conceived by the pious Christian, but which cannot be described. Profound adoration, love, gratitude, confidence, hatred of sin, contempt of the world, a longing desire to be dissolved and be eternally united to an object so amiable, are the welcome which he gives his Saviour, the converse into which he enters with him. And now, refreshed by this heavenly food, he encounters, with redoubled vigor and alacrity, the few remaining difficulties in his way to paradise. Now the cross of his Divine Redeemer has become unusually light, the cup of his passion more sweet than ever. His habitual virtues, like flowers after the vernal rains, now smile with fresh beauty, and diffuse new

fragrance around him. He is an object of sweet and pious attraction to man, and of complacency even to God himself. Even the hardened sinner, if such approach his bed, is half converted at the sight. The triumph of religion over infidelity, of virtue over the passions, of the cross over Satan and the world, cannot be witnessed with indifference; and the profligate himself is forced to exclaim with Balaam, perhaps in the same fatal obduracy of heart: *May my soul die the death of the just, and may my latter end be like unto theirs.*

But we are to come to the close of this edifying scene. The just man has run his course. He has completed his contracted round of time, and is now in the haze of that horizon which divides it from eternity. The shortening breath, the fluttering pulse, the fixing eye, the dampy chill, are the last efforts rebellious nature makes to fix him still to earth, and hold him back from those celestial regions to which he is hastening. Satan too makes his last assault: but in vain! Having triumphed over the flesh and hell in life, he shall triumph over them in death. *Though he be now in the midst of the shadow of death, he shall fear no evil, for God is with him.* Yes, his God! his omnipotent, his infinitely generous, infinitely faithful friend, is with him, has him locked fast in his arms, and is bearing him on his own divine wings to the mansions of his glory. His guardian angel and legions of kindred spirits officially hover around him. What has he to fear? The figure of his dying Lord is presented to him. Oh sweet, oh cheering sign! He presses it to his lips, to his heart. His Saviour, with all his merits, with all his satisfaction, stands before the eye of his soul; his looks are those of mercy, peace, and love. *Arise, my beloved,* he sweetly calls to him: *the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; arise and come!* Happy, thrice happy Christian. He obeys the summons. Hell is overcome; and death in an instant is absorbed in everlasting life.

Such, my brethren, is the exit of those who keep the words of Christ: such the result of the choice they make of his service before that of his enemies. Had the just man, whose death I have been endeavoring to portray, made a contrary election; instead of walking in the narrow path of the Gospel, had he trod the broad road of the world, could he have prevented his

journey from advancing? Could he have impeded the wing of time? He must at length have come to the conclusion of all his pleasures. But could he, with all his listlessness, have escaped his God? After all, would he not have been obliged to remember him? Notwithstanding all his hardiness, would he not have been forced into tears for his sins? Ah! but what kind of tears? Not those of repentance, but those of galling disappointment and despair; not such as sweetly flow from a David or Magdalen, but such as start forth from an Antiochus or a Judas. As it was, his labors and sufferings sped rapidly by, as did the hours of his pilgrimage. Even in their quick passage, they were mere phantoms: their thorns were but apparent, their puncture but imaginary. His Saviour, faithful to his word, had proved to him how light was his burthen, how sweet his yoke. The victory over his passions had won for him a peace of soul more delightful than all the pleasures of the world. Child of God and heir of heaven, he already bore the mien of royalty on his brow: and the slaves of this vile world, among whom he moved, could not but reverence him as one whose dignity was infinitely superior to their own. Thus, even whilst an inhabitant of this world, he participated in the joys and privileges of the other: and what is to be his condition for eternity? In reward for the momentary restraint of faith, he shall range for ever in the unbounded fields of God's own infinite knowledge: and for having excluded from his heart the polluted drops of forbidden pleasure, he shall be engulfed in the rivers of delight, which flow from the bosom of self-existing beauty and perfection. In a word, created for knowledge and love, he shall indulge his noble propensities to their full extent for eternity, in reward for having confined them to their legitimate objects during the moment of time.

Let then, such of my present audience, as are endeavoring to keep the words of Christ, congratulate with themselves on their happy condition; let them but persevere, and the promise made to obedience shall shortly be verified in them: *they shall not see death for ever.* But if, among you, there be any who listen to the dictates of their passions, rather than the maxims of their Redeemer, let them reflect on the inevitable consequence which must result from their folly. Let them remember, that

the sentence pronounced against Adam, stands in its full force against them; and that, at the hour of death, they will be in a far worse case, than if they had never been redeemed. *Arise, then, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall enlighten thee.* Seize on life eternal. Forfeit not your glorious destination. Atone for your past disobedient conduct by condign penance. Regulate your lives in future by the words of Jesus Christ. Thus, you shall still be entitled to the effects of redemption, and, instead of dying the death, shall, at the close of your mortal pilgrimage, enter with Christ's true disciples into life everlasting.

Sermon XXII.

Quinquagesima Sunday.

DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

I go and you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin.—JOHN viii. 21.

SPIRITUAL writers are of opinion, that the Scripture does not contain a more awful denunciation, than that which is contained in this text. Although addressed immediately to the Jewish people, it is not to be considered as applicable solely to them. Jerusalem, regardless of the time of her visitation, is the emblem of a soul unfaithful to the calls of grace, and the judgments denounced against that guilty city, have a farther reference to impenitent Christians. It would likewise be wrong to suppose, that, amongst Christians, the threat of the law of God is confined to that comparatively small number, which has laid aside all religious restraint, to follow implicitly the guidance of the passions. No! my brethren, it extends moreover to those, who indulge in unlawful gratifications here, and yet flatter themselves with the hope of escaping the justice of One, who will punish crimes hereafter. It extends to all that multitude of Christians, who stifle remorse of conscience, the last grace offered by a departing God, with intermediate purposes of reform. It extends, my brethren, to as many among you, as continue in sin, under the persuasion of your being able, at any time, to recover the friendship of your Creator.

To die in sin, and to suffer torments of endless duration, which this implies; I dare say, there is not a person in this assembly, who does not tremble at the very thought of such a misfortune. You discover, by the light of your faith, the incalculable evil of this death, and you finally persuade yourselves that it will never be yours. But does your confidence rest upon

present conduct, or upon resolutions of future amendment? Are you at present free from the tyranny of criminal passions, or are you waiting the time when their violence shall subside? Can you now look forward towards eternity with confidence, or do you expect at the hour of death those powerful graces, which enable the sinner to triumph in an instant over rooted habits of vice? If the latter supposition be true, then does Jesus Christ say to you, as he did to the Jews, *you shall die in your sin.*

To give some extent to these reflections, it is intended, in the following discourse, to show the insufficiency of death-bed repentance—for this is the point at which delayed conversion almost always ends—by arguments drawn, first, from the *justice of God;* secondly, from the *character of man.*

Few arguments are so frequently urged against delay of repentance as the uncertainty of human life, and there are few which so clearly show the folly of the unrepenting sinner. To be convinced by the most sensible proofs of the precarious tenure by which life is held, yet to dispose of its various periods with an assurance which unlimited control would hardly justify; to repose with confidence upon years, without being certain of an instant, is indeed a folly, for which reason is at a loss to account; and can only be explained by the inconsistent character of human nature, and the unhappy influence of passion in blinding the understanding and rendering unintelligible the most obvious truths. But when to the numberless accidents which give cause to death, and which have their origin in natural occurrences, in internal weakness or external violence, we add, that He, whose displeasure is provoked by sin, can in an instant cut the thread of life and summon the sinner to his tribunal in the midst of his days, our surprise at his presumption is still farther increased. For, that the Supreme Being not only possesses, but on a variety of occasions exerts this power, is a truth less evident indeed to the senses, but not less certain than the former. He does not, it is true, as heretofore, exert his prerogative in a visible manner. He does not now precipitate the rebel Israelite alive into the abyss, nor does he disclose the hand that strikes Baltassar in the midst of his infamous debauch; but his anger is equally formidable, although it acts unseen.

Not choosing to disturb the harmony of his works by any direct interposition of his power, he conceals his wrath under the appearance of natural agents, and forms his designs to the similitude of ordinary occurrences; yet he does not suffer the executioner of his decrees to strike at random; he still guides unerringly the arm of death, and safely lodges his arrows in the bosom of the destined victim.

If, in the pursuit of criminal pleasure, a sinner receive a mortal stroke; if he fall motionless in the hour of insensibility; if some unknown cause extinguish the vital spark, it was God, my brethren, who gave the fatal order. But, then, considerations of the natural uncertainty of human life, and the secret judgments of God, though sufficient to terrify a religious mind, do not leave the determined sinner entirely without resource. He may still continue attached to habits of vice, without resigning his pretensions to the rewards of virtue. The casualties of life, though innumerable, he may chance to escape, and the judgments of God, though they fall upon thousands, may yet not light upon him. But the words of our Divine Redeemer, which are the subject of this discourse, render impenitence hopeless: they leave no medium between present conversion and final reprobation, with all its consequent horrors. In fact, if the threat of the Son of God fell upon those only, who by sudden death are deprived of the opportunity of seeking a reconciliation with him, or only upon those monsters of impiety, who, for an ostentatious display of courage, neglect it when offered, the sinner would seem to have some grounds for his presumption; since the far greater part, even of those who have lived in an open violation of the divine law, quit this world with every seeming mark of sorrow and repentance. But it is this last prop of impenitence, which he particularly intended to remove. He does not therefore say, you shall be surprised by death; the midnight assassin, the noon-day ruffian, or the hand of chance shall hurry you in an instant out of life; you shall have neither time nor opportunity to repent. No! he says something more terrible. He says, *you shall seek me:* that is to say, you shall perform every thing in appearance requisite for real conversion; you shall confess your sins, you shall sigh and implore forgiveness; your friends shall be overjoyed at the seeming

happy change, and declare, that though your life was immoral, your death was most holy; but I say to you, that you shall die an outcast and a reprobate. *You shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin.* Christians, you startle at this indignation, this stern and unbending rigor. But are you ignorant of its cause? It is divine justice, the justice of that God who has declared that he will not be mocked, and that what a man sows, the same shall he reap.

This is the motive and the cause. This it is, which narrows the stream of mercy upon the bed of death. It is this which renders a death-bed repentance of all things the most difficult in the order of grace. But is there then a time, when the sinner is forbidden to hope? No, my brethren, to hope is, to his last breath, his bounden duty; and even the most desperate are commanded never to despair. This is indeed true, and it is equally true, that the sinner, who strays in a forbidden path until the evening of life, shall in vain seek to return, when he is overtaken by the night. It is equally true, that the sinner, who, to the call of grace inviting him to repentance, has uniformly answered, *I will not obey*, shall find his God deaf to his sighs and prayers, in the last tremendous hour. *I called*, says the Spirit of God, *and you refused: I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded. You have despised all my counsel, and neglected my reprehension. I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock, when that shall come to you which you feared.*

Yes, my brethren, the sinner, who in the day of his strength has been in the habit of mocking God, shall himself be mocked and insulted, when from the bed of sorrow he raises his dying voice in supplication towards a brazen sky. *Then*, says the same Spirit of God, *shall they call upon me, and I will not hear.* Oftentimes does the sinner say in his heart, there will be time enough to think of God and eternity, when I shall be summoned to quit this busy scene. I will then confess my sins, and appease the anger of heaven, by the fervor of my repentance. Supposing him to be then in a condition to perform the external part, who shall answer for what depends on God? Will you then, O sinners, regain the forfeited friendship of your Creator without his permission? Will you snatch graces from that hand

which shall be then armed only with thunder? You may indeed pray, but will God attend? You may sigh, but will he absolve? If there be aught of truth in his divine word, he will not. No, he denies not, that you will *seek* him; but he says, you shall not *find* him. He acknowledges that you will implore forgiveness, but he tells you he will not hear: he supposes that, standing on the margin of the abyss, you will endeavor, by promises and entreaties, to move him to compassion; but to this he answers, *I will be avenged and be consoled.* I am well aware, my brethren, that this language, which contradicts the opinion of God's unbounded clemency, will sound harsh and grating to the ears of Christians little accustomed to reflect on the rigor of his justice. But, my brethren, if this be severe, it is at least the severity of God. It is not the dream of fancy, nor the phantom of imagination: it is neither a sounding brass nor tinkling cymbal, but it is God's immutable word; and to him, if severity there be, must the imputation of severity attach.

After all, my brethren, where is the severity? Is it then unreasonable that God, so often insulted by the sinner, should at length spurn him in his turn? Is it unjust, that He, who had so frequently exhorted the sinner to repent, should refuse to hear him, when he can no longer offend? Is it unrighteous that, after a thousand invitations slighted, and a thousand mercies abused, he should at length depart in dreadful anger from him, and leave him to die in his sin? Let the Christian, who understands so well the laws of propriety, who exacts the debt of punishment with so much rigor from an equal, and requires so many humiliations from an offending brother, before he will restore him to his forfeited friendship, be here the judge: and let him declare, whether a Being of infinite dignity exceeds the just measure of retribution, after years of ineffectual endeavors to reclaim his own ungrateful creature, if he at last oppose to the cold insensibility of the sinner's heart, the stern inflexibility of his own? When a religious Christian, my brethren, beholds, in those ill-fated countries which have never received the light of the Gospel, millions of beings cut off by their Creator; when he beholds this same God, even in the midst of these chosen nations, rejecting from his kingdom so many unfortunate infants, who for want of baptism, can never become citizens of heaven;

not presuming to question the justice of Him, whose judgments are ever right, he humbly adores its unfathomable depths. But, when he sees an obstinate sinner called, invited, and pressed in vain to return to his father's house, and at length, in consequence of his abuse of grace, abandoned by God, and his tardy repentance rejected with indignation; neither his reason nor faith is shocked: far from feeling surprised that God is thus inexorable to a dying sinner, his only wonder is, that sinners, knowing, as they do, that he will not accept of this reluctant conversion, should yet continue in sin, until no mercy remains to stay the hand of his justice. But why all this display of divine justice? Is it not still true, that our God is a God of compassion? are not his mercies above all his works? is he not said to be all mercy? Yes, he is indeed a merciful God; and of this there can be no better proof, than his patience in bearing the ingratitude of sinners, and the kindness with which he still holds out the hope of pardon.

But let us not exalt one attribute at the expense of another. If he is a God of mercy, he is likewise a God of justice; and, although to exercise clemency be his delight, he will not so far indulge this favorite attribute as to forget the rights of the other. He is a merciful God; but then it is a mercy that must contribute to his perfection and his glory; not a mercy which favors iniquity: a mercy which consists in accepting the prompt repentance of a sinner, who is ready to sacrifice the dearest object of his affection for the recovery of the friendship of his God, and to offer a broken heart at the throne of his offended Creator; but not a mercy which dispenses with the punishments of sin, and views the rejection of every grace with equal indifference.

Were it possible for mercy to gain such undue influence in the divine bosom as should make God close his eyes to the presumption and persevering ingratitude of the sinner, furnish him still with time and grace that he may continue to abuse them, and at last crown all his favors by an unqualified remission of every crime, he would then resemble those senseless idols with which, in the days of paganism, his worship was insulted. He would then, indeed, have eyes and see not: and is it thus, O sinner, that you deem of One whom you cannot but acknow-

ledge to be all perfection? Is it thus that you value graces which were purchased by the last groans of the Son of God? Is it thus irreverently that you trample on the precious pearl of final perseverance? Unhappy persevering sinner, is there nothing to alarm your presumption in the fall of those illustrious men who seemed to have secured to themselves this precious gift? Solomon, the wisest of men, and the favorite of Heaven, after following, for forty years, the path of righteousness, is at last permitted to stray, and so far is his wisdom perverted unto folly, that he, who was the first to erect a temple to the God of Jacob, offers incense to the divinities of the nations, and bows his gray hairs to the idols of Ammon. Judas, an apostle, tutored by Christ himself to virtue and holiness, admitted to the familiarity of his divine Master, and intrusted with power more than human, falls, notwithstanding all those favors, and dies in despair. Anchorets of the desert, grown old in sackcloth and chains of iron, heroes of Christianity and martyrs of penance have been tempted at the close of their painful career, have fallen from their stupendous heights, and died in their sin. If these examples are insufficient to show the value of grace, turn your eyes, my brethren, to another kind of spectacle, and consider what the saints thought of this first and greatest of all the gifts of Heaven. You will find among them men whose names give lustre to our calendar, angels in mortal bodies, vessels of election, replenished with good works, and adorned with innumerable trophies over the world, the flesh, and hell, still trembling for the precious grace of final perseverance. Whilst they hoped for it from the divine goodness, they yet feared lest a severe justice should withhold from them what it is beyond the power of human nature, however holy, to secure. Hence those sighs, those tears, those humble acknowledgments of unworthiness: hence the bed of ashes and the culprit's cord. How widely different are these dispositions from the presumption of the sinner! He, in the midst of his irregularities, engaged in numberless criminal habits, daily plunging deeper in the gulf of iniquity, and daily repelling his God to a greater distance by fresh excesses and fresh crimes, still relies with full security on obtaining this grace. Unwilling himself to doubt, he is offended with those who doubt of its being granted him

even on the bed of death. You have seen, my brethren, what little reason he has to expect it on the part of God; if you now consider his personal efforts to obtain it, you will find that the threat of Jesus Christ, however well-founded on divine justice, receives its principal confirmation from the sinner's own heart. The examination of these dispositions will occupy the remaining part of this discourse.

To prove the insufficiency of death-bed repentance, as it depends on the co-operation of the sinner, abundant testimonies might be adduced from those illustrious fathers of the Church, whose opinions, if superiority of genius affords a clearer insight into the working of the heart of man, or elevation of sanctity enables to take more enlarged views of the counsels of God, cannot be too highly respected and reverenced. But the time is now passed, when the assertions of an Ambrose or an Augustine were equivalent to demonstration. The present is an age of reason. To reason, therefore, I appeal. Religion, though abundantly supplied from the fountain of inspiration, rejects not the tribute of her handmaid. We will then suppose, that the sinner, borne rapidly down the stream of life, has reached at length the indivisible point that separates eternity from time, and that he now lies before us on the bed of death. Or, if there be one in this assembly, who rests his salvation on the delusive hope, let him suppose, that he himself is there. A supposition, which, before this very day is ended, may be realized, will not appear strange. Nor can those vague and indeterminate notions of future conversion, which he may entertain, be any obstacle to it. The man that will not now resolve to leave his sins, only deludes himself when he thinks of doing this hereafter. The same difficulties that now stand in the way of his conversion, will oppose it a week, a month, or a year hence.

The same passions that now possess his heart, will continue there, until the time of mercy shall have passed away: the same evil propensities, that now hurry him forward from indulgence to indulgence, from crime to crime, will attend him to the verge of life, and descend with him into the grave. *His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust.* He may, therefore, without the help of imagination, consider this as his last hour; for, with regard to

amendment, it will certainly be so. Here, then, let him figure to himself his own situation as a dying man, and his dreadful responsibility as a dying sinner. Let him, parched with fever, and tortured with pain, the powers of his mind enfeebled by mortal sickness, and the liberty of his will diminished by the violence of returning anguish, consider how he is to make his peace with an offended Creator; and, whilst the hand of death diffuses torpor and insensibility through his frame, let him calmly and collectedly sit down to review the book of his heart, and put the last hand to the accounts of eternity.

You, my brethren, if you have ever been reduced by sickness to the point of death, can say how well he will perform the task. But pain and death are not the only intruders that will break upon his meditations. A disconsolate family surrounds his bed, and, even when he is expiring, would persuade him he is not mortal. Instead of advising him to think of the neglected duties of religion, they watch the moment of returning reason, to raise his hopes of life, to divert his mind from what alone should occupy it, to turn his attention to the occurrences of a world, which it would be now his greatest happiness never to have known, or to fix upon themselves the sigh that should whisper mercy of his God.

Yes, it is thus, to spare a momentary pang, that the husband, the wife, the child, the friend, is exposed to eternal, unutterable anguish! Oh could I here throw open the gates of that abyss, in which these victims of a fatal caution are for eternity confined, with what curses would they load this guilty fondness! Even when nature gives evident signs of approaching dissolution, the minister of religion is reluctantly called, and as if, instead of the consoling rites, which he is about to administer, the secondary purpose of which is to restore corporal health; as if he came, like the enthusiast priest of some fictitious deity, to devote his victim to destruction, his arrival is viewed with mingled sentiments of horror and dismay. At last, he reaches the bed of death, and, had he time to meditate, what a field is here for his meditation! The gay votary of pleasure, who perhaps but yesterday attracted the admiration or the envy of the thoughtless crowd by wit, by beauty, or by fortune, now laid prostrate at the feet of death, with every feature sadly changed,

the disconsolate parent stripped of the staff and glory of declining age, the flourishing family about to fall to ruin in consequence of the removal of a corner-stone; above all, the unhappy soul, dead in mortal sin, and on the point of appearing before its judge; these, my brethren, are scenes for enforcing a conviction of the transitory nature of human happiness, and of the folly of those, who, whilst they throw away the whole of life on the bewitching of vanity, leave the business of eternity dependent on the fortune of an hour. But the time for these reflections is short, and it only remains to administer, or profane the sacraments of the Church. With pious care the zealous minister endeavors to rouse the sinner from his deadly slumber. He urges him to set his house in order. He tells him to remember that he has a God to fear, and a soul to save, and that but an instant remains to save it. Flattered by pretended friends into a belief, that his sickness was not unto death, with what terror does the sinner at last hear the dreadful truth! Must I then die? does he exclaim: must I now be separated from those pleasures which have hitherto possessed my heart? Must I be torn from my riches, those riches which have been acquired with such toil, preserved with so much disquietude, enlarged with so much injustice? O cruel death, dost thou make so bitter a separation? Yes, unhappy man, night has at last stolen upon you, when you are no more to expect the return of day. A few short hours hence, and you will have for ever passed the boundaries of time. But why are you troubled at the thought? have you been so often warned of the vanity of all human things, has experience so often convinced you of their instability, has the noise of fallen greatness so often reached your ear, has the funeral procession so often crossed your way, has death so often severed the friendly knot, has he so often burst in upon the domestic circle, to be still unlooked for, still unexpected? Whilst so many others have become his prey, are you still surprised, that he should seize on you? Can you not now detach your heart from a world, which has long been sinking beneath your feet? Deluded mortal! It was your boast, that you would cease to love the world, when you could no longer enjoy it; that you should then quit it without regret; nay, that your former affection would be turned into hate.

The time for making the experiment is now arrived. Hate it, then; innumerable motives call on you to hate it; its emptiness, which always left something wanting to your happiness; its instability, of which you have at present the best proof; and its crimes, of which you have so often shared the guilt, and for which you are now to answer at an unerring tribunal. Ah, my brethren! powerful as is the hand of death to tear the soul from her earthly tenement, it yet has not strength to separate her from her fond idols: gladly would she dwell here for ever with them, gladly would she bear them with her beyond the grave. Like Saul expiring on the mountains of Gelboe, the sinner's whole soul is still within him, his carnal inclinations continue undiminished, and the profane love of creatures still burns, amidst the ruins of a shattered frame.

You know, my brethren, that these are almost always the dispositions of a dying sinner, and of that sinner too, who had flattered himself, during life, that he should meet no obstacle in his own heart to oppose his conversion at the hour of death; who had said, that he would then seek his God and find him, and would not die in sin. And, my brethren, are you yourselves under no delusion in this particular? have you never gone into these counsels of the sinner? has his presumption never been, is it not still your own? Is there no one in this small assembly, to whom it appears an unnecessary servitude to follow the severe laws of the Gospel, and to take heaven by violence, when he thinks that one single confession will sweep away every transgression, and remove every disqualification to his becoming a saint when he can no longer remain a sinner? This much, at least, is certain, that confession and communion, at the point of death, are, in the world's estimation, passports that never fail to procure admission into heaven. It may then be worth our while to examine a little into the merits of an action, which is to lay the gates of paradise open to the sinner,—still, however, keeping in mind the dulness, insensibility and anguish, which necessarily attend a mortal sickness.

The first requisite of penance is confession, or an unreserved exposure of the sinner's offences; and not only of those gigantic crimes, that stalk before a dying sinner, summoned by conscience to attend his bed in all their horrors, and to plunge

him into despair, but of a countless multitude of other transgressions, which hitherto he has been unable to discover, ashamed to declare, or unwilling to forsake, of a whole life, perhaps the least criminal part of which has been spent in an utter disregard of the great business for which he was created. Treasures of iniquity, beginning with the licentious scenes of youth, in which pleasure and the passions were his only guides, and extending through the lengthened period of manhood, in which fortune was the idol, the world his temple, its maxims his religion, and its laws his gospel; even to the follies of declining age, itself deformed by avarice, ambition, and hard-heartedness, and not unfrequently by more shameful irregularities. Sins peculiar to his station in life; the violated duties of husband, parent, master; sins against his neighbor, the injustice of competition, the malevolence of slander; the ruined character, the murdered soul. Sins against his God; the neglected duty of prayer, the omitted obligation of alms; confessions hypocritical, and communions sacrilegious. Sins against his religion; no, I mistake: the fashionable sinner of the present age has no religion. Religion, its laws and institutions, have been his standing jest. By a contempt for every received opinion, he has manifested the extent of his genius: by arraigning the truths of revelation, asserted his claim to philosophy, and by an affectation of skepticism, destroyed the suspicion of vulgarity. Such is the chaos of iniquity, which frequently in a few hours, the sinner has to arrange and methodize. It is unnecessary to add, how one, who shrunk from the idea of suffering, performs this laborious task, whilst encompassed by the sorrows of death: still, however, if contrition be perfect, the rest were of minor consequence.

But if it be certain that the confession is faulty, it is much more than probable that the sorrow is insincere. This, to be perfect, or even sufficient, must flow from other motives than a servile dread of punishment: it must be tinctured with at least some share of grief for the injury done to God. Now, what are the motives that actuate a dying sinner in his repentance? is he drawn by the attractions of divine beauty? No, he is impelled by the terrors of divine justice, he is swayed solely by the fear of punishment; and, as the love of God has no part in his sorrow, as he is afraid to burn and not afraid to

sin, so the mercy of God has no motive to raise him from the depths in which his soul cries in vain—whilst his threat is exactly accomplished: *you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin.* Should it be asked how I presume to arrogate the prerogative of diving into the secrets of hearts, and of confidently deciding upon what can be known only to God, I answer, that superior wisdom is here unnecessary, his former relapses justify my inference, or if he has never relapsed because he has never confessed, the very nature of his situation renders it sufficiently evident that it is not he that now leaves his sins, but his sins that leave him. No, my brethren, there is no need of omniscience to decide in this case; only let death for a time resign his conquest, and you will soon be convinced of the insincerity of this conversion. Let but the storm blow over, and you will behold this seemingly repentant sinner ashamed of his former terrors, laugh at the credulity of a confessor, and improve upon every crime which he now so hypocritically detests. I say nothing of satisfaction, the complement of penance, and the best proof of its sincerity. In fact, what satisfaction can a dying man make? What has he to offer at the throne of grace? His riches? they are no longer his own: they are the spoils of his vanquisher; and his God will indeed be greatly obliged to him for the pious donation of what he cannot retain! Shall he offer his present sufferings? but how does he suffer? Why, as he repents:—reluctantly and by compulsion. What more has he to offer? his life perhaps: but with what sentiments does he die? With what sorrow and regret, because he has not here an everlasting dwelling! What then shall he do to obtain eternal life? or rather, what shall he do to obtain exemption from the lot of those who seek God, yet die in their sins? This is a question which the minister of religion will perhaps himself have to answer; and if charity did not at that awful moment oblige him to conceal the sentiments of his heart, what would be his answer? In all probability, it would be somewhat similar to this: that the sinner should not have slighted the admonitions of those who held out the dangers of delay where all is at stake for eternity; that we are not so far masters of our own hearts as to pass from an ardent attachment to the world during the whole life, to an entire disengagement from it at the hour of death; that the

analogy between corporal infirmity and spiritual indisposition is striking; and that, as a constitution shattered by disease is only restored to the exercise of its faculties by the slow and imperceptible operations of nature, so a soul, enervated and enfeebled by habits, is with difficulty and time renewed to health and vigor by the still more insensible workings of grace; that those flashes of grace which strike the sinner to the ground, to make him rise a vessel of election, are not bestowed upon all, and are specially refused to those who have lived in sin on the presumption that they will be granted to them. *You shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin.* But the language of a confessor is then very different. Truth undisguised would, in these dreadful moments, overpower the sinner, and cloud for ever the last faint ray of hope. He is, therefore, the first to exhort him to confidence.

The gates of heaven, he tells him, are never closed upon the truly penitent, even at the hour of death. He calls to his remembrance the laborer who entered the vineyard when the day was far spent; but fails to observe that there is also a night in which no man can work. He cites the example of a Magdalen, of a Paul, and others, who became in an instant eminent saints: but would have him forget that, although the Scriptures relate the conversions of many abandoned sinners, only one instance of this is recorded to have happened at the time of death, and that even this was when a God expired. He quotes various passages from the inspired writings in which the goodness and mercy of his heavenly Father are extolled, but carefully keeps out of view others of an opposite tendency; particularly that which says, *you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin.*

In a word, he omits no exhortation which may cheer the flagging spirits; reveals no truth that may damp the confidence of the sinner: he gives absolution, he administers the sacraments; but the effects of these sacraments, the ratification of this absolution, only God, my brethren, can bestow. Yes, Christians, pardon me if I tell you you are grossly deceived when you place any reliance on the conversion of a dying sinner.

Nothing in appearance can be more pious than such a death, nothing more consoling; but at the same time, there is nothing more equivocal, nothing more suspicious to the eye of faith.

You may perhaps have seen the sinner eager to confess his sins, receive the consolations of religion with streaming eyes, clasp in his feeble arms the image of a crucified God, and repeat with earnestness the name of Jesus the Deliverer. You have heard him, perhaps, deplore the vanities of that world which led him astray from the path of virtue; you have heard him give pathetic instructions to his children, and exhort them not to follow the example which he has had the misfortune to afford them.

Encouraged by these signs of repentance, and still more deceived by self-love, the sinner rejoices in the happiness of his departing friend; raises his eyes for once in gratitude to heaven, and calmly goes his way, in full confidence of arriving at salvation by the same compendious path; whilst even the just man, not sufficiently penetrating the judgment of God, is ready to exclaim, in the fervor of his charity, May I die such a death, and may my last end be like unto his! It were well, my brethren if these attestations of his sincerity could prove of benefit to the sinner at the judgment-seat. Happy would the dying sinner be, if these could save him. But, my brethren, I must once more repeat, that the Son of God supposed every one of these exterior demonstrations of repentance, when he said, *you shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin.* And, indeed, can it appear surprising, that a person at the point of death, who beholds behind him a life spotted with every iniquity, and before him a Judge inexorably just, should seek the aids of religion, to shield him from the frowns of Heaven? Without supposing a single atom of the love of God, or regret for having offended him, is not self-preservation a sufficient inducement to a person thus circumstanced to search through Israel for her prophets, to call to his bedside some obscure ecclesiastic, whose unaccommodating firmness at any other time was dreaded or despised? Without acknowledging any revolution of the internal man, is not the bare view of the coming wrath alone sufficient to call forth the sighs, the tears, and the promises of Antiochus? Considering the situation of a dying sinner, is it not to be feared, that all this parade of sorrow and repentance conceals a heart that fears nothing in God, but that red right-hand? detests nothing in sin but its punishment? I would not

be understood to mean, that it is ever allowable to form a judgment of any particular individual: but when this much has been conceded to charity, it will still remain certain, that repentance consists not in words, but in actions, not in exterior demonstrations of sorrow, but in a change of heart; and that *not every one, who says, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.*

These remarks, my brethren, have appeared intemperate; yet I shall advance a step farther, and, grounded on the word of God, shall venture to express a doubt, whether those sacraments, which are supposed to bestow an indubitable claim to beatitude, have not, instead of finishing the salvation, put the last seal to the reprobation of the sinner. Or, if I am too severe, be you yourselves the judge. Draw nigh to your expiring brother. The bed of the dying is at all times a school of wisdom; the bed of a dying sinner should be doubly instructive. Behold him, pale and trembling, locked in the arms of death. Survey those features cast in his unsightly mould! You know his life; declare then what you think of his death. He has indeed just received his God within his bosom; but is he there as his comforter or his accuser; his Saviour, or his judge? He utters some unintelligible words; do these contain a fervent prayer for mercy, or an ominous foreboding that all is lost? His eyes are immovably and for ever fixed; do they behold the opening gates of paradise, or the jarring portals of the bottomless abyss? His countenance is convulsed, the soul trembles upon the quivering lips; but whither, oh! whither is it hastening? to joys which it is not given to human imagination to conceive? The disconsolate family kneels around the now breathless corpse, and supplicate their Saviour not to suffer that soul to perish, for which he died. Do they move him to mercy, or to indignation? do they call up the ancient fondness of a father for an undutiful child, or do they stimulate the resentment of a benefactor for grace abused? They solicit the suffrages of the saints for him, who now stands at the bar to receive his final doom; do those holy ones, who surround the throne of God, second these weak efforts with the weight of their powerful intercession, or do they subscribe to the decree of condemnation? *Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right!*

Here, my brethren, let us stop our inquiries: and not attempt to burst the seals of that book, which is only to be opened on the great accounting day. However slender our hopes, let us still pray for those who have departed, whether they be connected with us by the ties of kindred, or of a common nature, that they may rest from their labor, and that their works may *not* follow them.

As for ourselves, though we cannot penetrate the world of spirits, of this much, at least, we are certain, (and it is what it most of all concerns us to know,) that if we now turn to God with our whole hearts, he will, however great may have been our offences, receive us with open arms; that if we delay our conversion, he will at last depart from us, and we shall die in our sins.

If, then, there be any one in this assembly, (I trust there are few; I hope there are none,) but if there be any one amongst you, my brethren, whom conscience accuses of being the sinner here meant to be described, may that person be induced to repent now, whilst repentance will be a virtue: may he be induced to turn to the Lord his God during this acceptable time, into which we are now on the point of entering; and if the difficulties and thorns of penance deter him from such a resolution, let him look with the eye of faith upon the greatness of the proposed reward, and, passing the insignificant baubles of time, upon the wings of hope, survey the greatness, the magnificence and eternal duration of that kingdom which God has prepared for those who love him. Or, if the joys of heaven have no charms for him, let him descend in spirit to the abodes of those malevolent beings, which have been created for vengeance; and there, amidst the cries of blasphemy, the shrieks of the tortured, and the wailings of a fruitless despair, let him ask himself whether he can endure everlasting burning; whether he can dwell for eternity with devouring fire. Let him there decide between the temporary inconveniences of this life and the eternal punishment of the next. But whatever part he may choose to adopt, let him not forget that the choice which he now makes, is made for ever.

Sermon XXXI.

The First Sunday in Lent.

MORTIFICATION NECESSARY.

And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry.—MATT. iv. 2.

EVERY portion of the history of our Divine Redeemer was intended to convey important lessons to his followers. The Church continually points at his example, and so distributes and adapts in her office the several incidents of his life, as to make them bear, as her instructions vary, on the particular lesson which she is desirous of teaching. At the commencement of the present holy season, when penance is her theme, she selects for our contemplation, the penitential exercise, which he underwent, previously to the opening of his mission; when retiring, as you have just heard in the gospel, to a distance from the society of men, he subjected himself to a severe and uninterrupted fast of forty days. At the conclusion of this protracted abstinence, exhausted nature demanded support, and this was the moment which he selected for confounding the insidious tempter of man. Entering, then, into the views of the Church, we cannot do better, on the present occasion, than fix our eyes on the instructive spectacle with which we are presented, and endeavor to learn, in this great example, what the obligation is, what the titles are, by which we ourselves are bound to the practice of penance.

Our Saviour fasts as man. In the long privation of sustenance which he endured, a miraculous power preserved indeed his existence, but did not prevent him from feeling the pains and inconvenience arising from his austerities. *And when he*

had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungry. He fasts as our model and our head. Being about to inculcate the necessity of works of mortification, he would excite and animate his followers to the performance of this duty, by his own sacred example. He fasts as one charged with the expiation of the sins of men. Having come from heaven in quality of our Redeemer, he offers up to his eternal Father this long and severe maceration of his flesh as part of his atonement. On an attentive consideration of these three characters, which our Lord here assumes, we shall find ample matter for instruction; inasmuch as they point out the triple obligation, which we all incur, of practising the virtue of mortification, as *men*, as *Christians*, and as *sinners*. A few reflections on this threefold obligation shall form the matter of my present discourse.

In the first place, then, my brethren, *as men*, as the offspring of a corrupted stock, self-denial is indispensably necessary for us. No sooner did our first parents transgress the divine command than labors and sufferings were declared to be their inseparable lot. Their descendants, born in pangs and in sorrow, were to eat their bread in the sweat of their brow: the earth was to yield them thorns and briars; and all nature was in some measure to disclaim the sovereignty of its fallen lord. But, if the effects of man's disobedience were thus widely felt in the objects around him, it was in his own breast that his transgression occasioned the most baneful revolution. From that moment, a furious and interminable war arose within him. His inferior appetites, rebellious to reason, incessantly demanded gratification at the expense of duty. All the powers of his soul were corrupted and brutalized. His will became perverse, sluggish to good, impetuous to evil: his understanding was overclouded with error, his heart was elated with pride, his affections were either fixed and centred on himself, or chained and enslaved to the objects around him; virtue from that moment assumed, in his jaundiced eye, a repulsive aspect, and the service of his Creator, which in innocence had been his sweetest occupation, became in guilt an employment of toil and restraint.

From this unhappy train of evils no one, of all the children of Adam, could in justice claim exemption. And it is not necessary for any one to go farther than his own heart, to wit-

ness these sad consequences of that first transgression. All have felt desires, which their better reason forbade them to gratify; all have felt within themselves that domestic warfare, described by St. Paul; all have experienced the rebellion of the flesh, which lusteth against the spirit, and all might, with truth, apply to themselves those words of the apostle, *The good which I will, I do not, but the evil which I will not, that I do.*

Here, then, my brethren, from this fatal propensity to evil, we learn the necessity of mortification. Here we find the apology for that holy anger, with which the saints of God have mortified the deeds of the flesh, by giving their bodies to fasting, their will to unreserved obedience, their whole lives to the severest exercise of penance. Here, in fine, we read the condemnation of the world, and of all its voluptuous maxims; the condemnation of its pleasures and its pastimes, its vanities and its excesses. Man, by sin, brought on himself all the miseries under which he groans; and as the inordinate propensities, to which he is subject, are the punishment of criminal indulgence, it is a duty incumbent on him in his fallen state, to meet and combat them by salutary restraints. God, the sovereign Physician, in undertaking to cure, by his suffering, the deep-struck malady of original sin, has pointed out the antidote which he would have us employ, if we would counteract the pernicious consequences which sin has entailed. Reason herself declares the exercise of mortification to be that, by which the dignity of man's nature is best supported and secured; and to suffer and endure is a precept, in the practice of which, a celebrated sage of antiquity has placed the perfection of virtue.

Indeed, my brethren, little will it avail you to have been restored to the dignity of children of God, if, by a life of pleasure, softness, and effeminacy, you oppose the triumphs of divine grace, and keep an understanding with the mortal enemies of your souls. Believe me, every concession which you make to an inordinate appetite, adds to the clamors and impetuosity of the passions, lessens your power of resistance, and prepares the way to greater and more dangerous concessions.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, can reign only in an unmortified soul. As a proof, examine for a moment the progress of depravity: interrogate the sinner,

who has plunged the deepest into the sink of vice: was it by some sudden revolution, by any instantaneous impulse of his passions, that he was hurried at once into criminal excess? Did the same day see him watchful, mortified, restraining all his irregular appetites, and then behold him sunk in guilty voluptuousness, a slave to all the base inclinations of his nature? Or was not his depravation rather the fruit of repeated concessions made to his sensual appetites? Did he not first enervate his heart, and gradually weaken and undermine his own virtue, by an unmortified life? Did he not, by habitual indulgence, add strength to his passions, and, by gratifying them in their less sinful demands, at length render them irresistible in those which were more criminal? Should such, unfortunately, be the line of conduct which you have pursued, attempt not, when you fall, to palliate your enormities, under the plea of the weakness of nature, the strength of your passions, the fascinating power of that which seduced you; rather attribute your calamity to its real cause, to your neglect of the wholesome exercises of penance. By neglecting these, you have neglected the means of safety which God had placed within your reach; and if you have received death, it is from the venom of a serpent, which would not have harmed you, had you not fostered it within your bosom.

But, alas! the generality of men consider these observances as duties incumbent indeed on persons in a retired or religious state, but wholly inapplicable to those who take an active part on the theatre of the world. In opposition to this so fatal an error, I assert, that the practice of penance is, to persons in the world, above all others, of the most imperative obligation. The man of contemplation might possibly find, in the constant meditation of the truths of eternity, in the undisturbed application of his mind to prayer and celestial things, in the sacred and sublime occupations of his state, wherewith to combat his inordinate appetites. In the world, on the contrary, all things tend to excite and augment their violence. In the world, besides the evil propensities of nature, you have to struggle against the force of general example, against the seductions of pleasure, artfully decked out in its most attractive garb, to enchant and captivate. There the passions are soothed and flattered; there

virtue is without honor; there vicious indulgence, in almost all its shapes, is excused; in many, is even applauded. In the world, then, the practice of self-denial is of the first necessity; there, if you are not mortified, your ruin is inevitable.

And here, my brethren, allow me to mention an objection not unfrequently brought forward against the duty which we are now considering. Does God, it is urged, delight in the sufferings of his creatures? has he gifted us with a thirst for pleasure which he intended never to be gratified? and is he, like some of the sanguinary idols of paganism, to be appeased by the blood and torments of his adorers? To obviate the futile and impious objection, we have only to recur to the origin of the duty of mortification, such as I have described it, to that domestic war in which the sin of Adam has engaged all his posterity. Know, then, O man, that if thou art subject to corrupt appetites, God is not the author of thy corruption: that thy progenitor, by an abuse of his free-will, depraved and degraded that nature which he has transmitted to thee; that God, in imposing upon thee the duty of mortification, is but withholding thee from that which would enslave but would not content thee, is but elevating thy desires to himself, in whom alone thou canst find satisfaction and repose. After thy probation here, a new state of being awaits thee. There, all thy desires shall be satiated, thy longings for happiness completely gratified. *I shall be satiated*, says holy David, *when thy glory shall appear.*

From mortification, as the duty of *men*, we will next proceed to consider it as the duty of *Christians.*

A Christian is defined by Tertullian, "one born to penance;" and indeed, if by assuming the name of Christians, we rank ourselves as followers and imitators of Christ, no duty can be more evident. The life of Christ, from its commencement to its close, was a continued series of privation and suffering. But, not content with setting the example, he has enforced the doctrine of the cross by repeated precepts: *He that would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be overcome with gluttony and drunkenness. Unless you do penance, you shall all perish.* The Church, the faithful interpretress of the will of her divine Spouse, has in like manner always considered

mortification a duty incumbent on all her children. When in baptism she ranked us among the faithful, she signed us with the cross, as if to point out the standard under which we engaged to combat. On that solemn occasion, before we were admitted to the benefits of redemption, we were required to declare perpetual war on Satan and his auxiliaries. From that moment, the mortification of the flesh, the subjugation of our passions, and the denial of our own will became a duty, from which we could not depart, without breaking the faith which we then solemnly pledged to the Most High. From that moment, we engaged to follow Christ in the rugged path which he had chosen; nor could we deviate from it without leaving and dishonoring our model and our head.

Yet, among those who make profession of Christianity, how rarely do we meet with one who properly performs this important duty. How many, on the contrary, are there who might be classed with those, whom the apostle designates with tears, as *enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction: whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame.* How many are there who, though again and again admonished by their repeated falls of the necessity of employing violence in subduing their inordinate inclinations, still shudder at the name of penance; still make the gratification of their appetites the whole study of their lives? How many are there who feel sad and sorrowful at the commencement of this holy time, for no other reason but because it opposes a slight check to their accustomed round of diversions and enjoyments? Oh! my brethren, the heavenly kingdom for which you are candidates is not to be won by the slothful and the luxurious. *From the days of John the Baptist until now*, says our Divine Redeemer, *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away. Every one*, says St. Paul, taking allusion from the wrestlers and those that ran in the race, *every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore*, continues the apostle, *so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection.* If your conduct be in opposition to these sacred admonitions, pretend

not to assume the name of Christian. You have dishonored the badge, deserted the standard of your chief: you have co-operated with his enemies, and have betrayed to them again the soul, which, at the price of his own blood, he had rescued from their yoke. You have, like Esau, bartered your birthright for a sensual gratification. Act, then, no longer the hypocritical part of marking your forehead with the emblem of Christ; rather throw off the mask, and at once openly declare that you follow the party of his enemies. *If the Lord be your God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.*

The third character, which I pointed out as rendering the severities of penance indispensable to us, was that of *sinners.* And here it is, my brethren, that this duty appears in all its weight and importance. On a certain occasion, when the disciples told our blessed Redeemer of the massacre of some Galileans, whom Pilate had ordered to be slain, whilst performing sacrifice,—an event which happened about the same time that a tower in Jerusalem fell down and crushed to death eighteen persons,—our Saviour, who turned every circumstance to the advantage and instruction of his hearers, took occasion from these two incidents to call their attention to the just judgments of God, which were impending over them for their sins, and hence inferred the need, which they all had, of penance, in order to be saved.

The individuals, he argued, who were thus suddenly cut off, were not greater sinners than others who survived them; and if, by an inscrutable judgment of God, they were selected for punishment, their fate ought to serve as a warning to those who were in a state of equal, if not of greater guilt. *Think you,* says he, *that those Galileans were sinners above all the men of Galilee, because they suffered such things? I say to you, no. But unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower fell in Siloe and slew them: think you that they also were debtors above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you no. But unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.*

Applying then, to yourselves, my dear brethren, this important instruction, delivered from the mouth of truth itself, and which was doubtless intended for you no less than for the Jews,

consider, for a moment, what is passing around you. Every where do you witness the effects of God's inscrutable judgments. On every side do you behold your fellow-creatures pining in misery, sickness, and want. Here, an unexpected stroke prostrates one from the number of your intimate acquaintances; there, you see another long struggling under the severest sufferings, and finally falling under the hand of death. Yet are these, who by the severity of their lot seemed marked and devoted in the decrees of an inscrutable but just Providence, greater sinners than yourselves? Let your own consciences answer the question.

Again; descend in imagination to the verge of the bottomless abyss, and view, in that place of indescribable wo, the punishments, with which an avenging God visits the violaters of his law: then, if mortal sin ever defiled your soul, if in that abode of torments you can descry one whose guilt is less heinous than your own, then, oh, then apply to yourselves in all their force, those words of our Divine Redeemer: *unless you do penance, you likewise shall perish.*

In the order of God's justice, sin must be punished. Into heaven nothing defiled can enter. By sin your soul hath contracted a defilement, which can be cleansed only in the crucible of penitential suffering. Say not that your transgression has been forgiven in the sacrament of penance. You have, it is true, deposited your crime at the feet of your ghostly father; yet how can we believe it to have been with perfect, or even with the necessary dispositions? The sinner, who has truly repented, regards himself as his own greatest enemy; he rages with a holy indignation against his own flesh; he treats it as a rebellious slave. He acts towards it, as he would towards a domestic traitor, whom he cannot put away. Such is the true penitent. But as for you, does not that dread, that flight of mortification, and of every thing that puts a restraint upon your appetites, indicate that you never really hated sin? But, let us suppose that you have confessed as you ought; do you imagine, that, because you are freed from the eternal punishment of sin, you are freed also from the temporal punishment which sin has entailed? That, while Christ is expiating your offences by a life of suffering and a death of ignominy, you may lead a life

of ease and voluptuousness? Ah! let the severe rules, the penitential exercises, imposed upon sin in the days of primitive fervor, convince you of the truth. Let the example of thousands of holy penitents, who punished slight offences by years spent in sighs and tears, and self-maceration, convince you of your error. So far from considering the pardon which they had received, as an exemption from penitential rigors, they only saw in it a stronger motive to punish and mortify that flesh, which had impelled them to offend so good and merciful a God.

From this view of the subject, my brethren, it follows, that, if mortification be a duty incumbent upon all, it is more imperatively so on those, who have offended God by wilful sin. The moment that worst of evils gained entrance into your breast, from that moment a penitential life was the only means of securing your salvation. In vain, then, do you attempt to shelter yourselves from the severe precept, by alleging excuses of inconvenience, of necessity, of business, of health. The law of penance is as general as sin. The precept is universal. *Unless you do penance, you shall all perish.* Think not, therefore, that, because a peculiar combination of circumstances may exempt you from the law of fasting, you are thereby exempted from the obligation of penance. No! Your director may, for prudential reasons, have exonerated you from keeping to the letter of the church precept; but he cannot exonerate you from the obligation of punishing yourself for sin. *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup of strong wine, full of mixture; the dregs thereof are not emptied: all the sinners of the earth shall drink.*

My brethren, from all that has been said, it follows, that the observance, to which you are now called, is not one of supererogation; it may not be practised or omitted at pleasure; it is an observance of absolute precept; one, on your fulfilment or neglect of which, nothing less than your eternal lot depends. Without the grace of God, no one can attain eternal life: in neglecting the practice of mortification, in giving way to sensual indulgence, in leading a life of softness, of pleasure, and of dissipation, you are directly opposing the influence of divine grace; you are throwing down the arms, which were given you

for combat, and are placing yourselves defenceless in the power of your mortal enemies. As you value, then, your salvation, my dear friends, let your notions and conduct on this vital subject be, from this moment, reformed. Resolutely undertake the mortification of your sensual appetites, the conquest of your rebellious will, the destruction of the empire of self-love. Undertake it as men, lest indulgence should strengthen, and render irresistible those evil propensities, of which you are the inheritors. Undertake it as Christians, lest you degrade that sacred character which you bear, and break the solemn engagements into which you have entered. Undertake it as sinners, lest, by failing to satisfy the injured justice of God in the present life, you come to feel the weight of his indignation in the life to come.

Let the holy season on which we are entering be to you the commencement of a new life. Courageously join with all the true children of the Church of God in declaring war upon the flesh and its concupiscences. If you are terrified at the prospect of privations and restraints, know, that God himself will render the rough way of penance smooth and agreeable, in proportion as you advance.

To animate yourself to the task, often extend your views beyond the present order of things. Often, in imagination, anticipate the moment, when you are to stand before the awful tribunal of an omniscient God: then, if you shall have deserved a favorable sentence, how pleasing will be the retrospect of the little crosses and momentary tribulations, by which you have purchased for yourselves above measure an exceeding weight of glory: but, should you unfortunately be cast at that momentous trial, how bitter the reflection, that for a few, fleeting, base, and deceitful gratifications, you have lost your title to eternal happiness, and incurred a condemnation to eternal wo.

Sermon XIX.

The Second Sunday in Lent.

ON THE PRIDE OF THE UNDERSTANDING AND OF THE HEART.

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him.
MATT. xvii. 5.

THAT the celebrated vision, described in the Gospel of this day, should have ravished into an ecstasy of delight the three apostles who were admitted to behold it, is by no means surprising. Witnesses, as they had already been, of the teaching and miracles of Christ, aware of the proofs, which he had already given them, of the truth of his mission, it is with the utmost joy that they now find this testimony of their Master confirmed by that of Moses, their great lawgiver, and of Elias, the most renowned of their prophets. The bright rays of celestial glory, with which they saw him encircled, completed their exultation. Forgetting every tie which still bound them to the earth, and wishing the ecstatic moments to endure for ever, they triumphantly exclaim: *Lord, it is good for us to be here.* After such a scene, the awful declaration and command which followed, might perhaps appear superfluous; and nothing further might seem wanting to strengthen a conviction grounded on the visible testimony of the inhabitants of heaven. But the splendors of glory were to disappear: abjection and humiliation were to follow; harsh and revolting truths were to be announced and received; severe and difficult lessons of virtue were to be preached and practised; afflictions, persecutions, ignominy, and death, were to be met and endured. Hence the propriety of that solemn declaration from heaven itself, contained in my text, which may thus be paraphrased. The person of whose

power and dignity you receive these lively indications, is He whom the law and the prophets have so long prefigured and foretold. Being the co-existing knowledge of the God-Head, he cannot reveal a single truth, or perform a single action, but what emanates from infinite wisdom, and gives glory to his eternal Father. If, therefore, when the splendor with which he is now invested shall have passed away, he assumes humility and poverty as his badge; however human pride may revolt at the sight, *hear ye him.* If he shall reveal truths beyond the reach of mortal sagacity, mysteries beyond the ken of mortal understanding; however human reason may recoil at the declaration, *hear ye him.* If he shall enjoin practices of self-denial and restraint, of humility and abjection; however flesh and blood may shrink from the command, *hear ye him.*

Considering, then, fellow-christians, the precept as addressed to all mankind, in the persons of the three Apostles, I will proceed to inquire, what are the chief and most common obstacles to its fulfilment. These I shall reduce to two heads, or rather to a single head, considered in two different relations: the *pride of the understanding*, and the *pride of the heart.* The *pride of the understanding*, which prevents mankind from believing the truths of the Gospel; the *pride of the heart*, which prevents them from fulfilling its precepts.

Pride was the sin by which our first parents forfeited their original innocence. To be like gods, knowing good and evil, was the preposterous ambition that brought on themselves and their posterity all the evils that attend our fallen state. The sin of pride, which thus contaminated the human race in its source, has equally infected it throughout its progress. Untaught by the yet recent scourge of the general deluge, and still unwilling to acknowledge their own insignificance, the descendants of Noah attempted to assume a state of independence, and to render themselves secure from the judgments of heaven. The impious attempt was no sooner frustrated, than the pride of man suggested a fresh expedient; and, as he could not make himself like to God, he next determined to make gods like to himself. Taking all the vices of his own depraved nature, he clothed each with an imaginary divinity, and then prostrated himself in adoration before deities, degraded, wicked, impotent

as himself. The pride of his heart was soothed and gratified, to be obliged to acknowledge no superior; to find in his gods his own imperfections; and, though his reason shrunk from the senseless worship, his passions fostered and upheld it.

Now, as the object of our Divine Redeemer's coming was to cure the wounds which sin had inflicted, to impart to men the saving knowledge of truth, and to restore to his Father the long misplaced homage of mankind, he could not do this so effectually, as by descending to the root of the evil, and exterminating that pride, which had both begun and continued the revolt of the human race. Hence we find, in both the life and the doctrine of Christ, an uninterrupted enforcement of the great and fundamental virtue of humility. The language which he holds, the truths which he announces, the mysteries which he reveals, the precepts which he inculcates, are most repugnant to the natural pride of man. Instead of attracting notice and applause by the splendor of his appearance, he chooses to be born and to live in want and obscurity; instead of taking, for his co-operators, men of genius, of power, or of repute, he seems studious to select those who are the most destitute of such qualifications. Instead of awakening their zeal with hopes of aggrandizement, he takes every opportunity to check the least appearance of ambition. Asked by the mother of the sons of Zebedee to assign a place of dignity for her sons, he replies by directing their attention to the ignominy and death that awaited him. Instead of giving to the truths and mysteries which he announces, the colorings of human eloquence, or softening their asperity by flattering interpretations, he asserts his dogmas in terms the most simple and unadorned. If the novelty and strangeness of his doctrines appear to excite astonishment, he only repeats them in the same harsh and offensive terms.

Such, then, being the nature of the doctrine and of the conduct of our Divine Redeemer, we shall not be at a loss to discover the reason why the Jews persisted in their disbelief, in spite of all the miracles which they saw performed among them, in spite of the testimony of the law and of the prophets, in spite of the testimony of John the Baptist, of Simeon, of the Magi, and even of their own senses: I had almost said, of conviction. That same spirit of pride, which had occasioned the fall of our

first parents, and plunged the world into the absurdities of paganism, prevented the Jews from acknowledging their Messiah. I go still further, and I maintain, that this fatal propensity of the human mind has, in all ages, formed the greatest obstacle to the hearing of Christ and to the faith which he came to establish; that its fatal working have given rise to all those errors which have at various periods agitated and divided the Christian world; in fine, that this is the source of that torrent of infidelity, which, in our own days, has so widely spread its devastating horrors.

For we are not to suppose, fellow-christians, that the crime of the Jews consisted in crucifying him, whom they knew to be God. St. Paul expressly assures us, that, *had they known, they never would have crucified the Lord of glory.* But whence their ignorance? From that indocile pride, which, refusing its assent to the evidences by which the Redeemer was pointed out, led the way to the unknown, yet culpable, commission of the worst of crimes. Measuring the power, and judging of the decrees of heaven, by the feeble glimmerings of their own reason, they disregarded the most unequivocal marks of the Messiah: because certain features, in his character and conduct, tallied not with their own preconceived notions. Each of the sects, into which they were divided, had given to the predictions of the sacred volume meanings congenial to their peculiar opinions and wishes.

The carnal Jews, intent on worldly honors and preferments, refused to believe in a Messiah who was not surrounded by the marks of temporal grandeur: wealth, notice, and preferment, personal and national independence, were the divinities that directed alike their belief and conduct. Priding themselves on being the children of Abraham, they arrogated the right of pointing out to heaven the manner in which its decrees were to be executed; and regulated their belief by the perverse desires of their hearts.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, under a demure and sanctified exterior, concealed minds no less deeply infected with pride. Studiously bent on human applause, they preserved the most scrupulous attention to those observances which might attract the public eye. To be saluted, flattered, and to have the place of honor assigned them, was the end of their alms and their

austerities. By the constant practice of dissimulation towards others, they had succeeded in deceiving even themselves; and, while they contemned the rest of men, they fancied themselves godly, virtuous, and just. That from men thus disposed, the doctrine of our Divine Redeemer, his precepts of self-denial and of humility, should meet with opposition, is not astonishing. Accordingly, we find, that, equally discontent with his appearance and with his doctrine, they contemn the one and cavil at the other. Blinded by the fatal passion which tyrannized over them, they became insensible to the most astonishing testimonies and miracles. They went further, and, stung by the reproaches which their own conduct met with in that of the Son of God, their pride rankled into hatred, and ceased not till its malignity was satiated by his blood.

The obstacle, fellow-christians, which the Jews raised against the doctrine of Christ, at its first announcement, is that which has ever proved the greatest enemy to the faith which he came to establish. For, what is the spirit of the religion of Christ? The religion of Christ is a religion which, in its dogmas and precepts, perpetually opposes the pride of man; a religion, of which one of the chief features is to sacrifice and destroy the presumptuous claims of human reason; a religion, in which the line and path in which the understanding is to move is precisely marked out; a religion, which requires from her children, not only a submission of the will to her precepts, but a submission of the understanding to her dogmas. Like her Divine Founder, she will not have her mysteries confined within the narrow limits of human comprehension. Receiving her illuminations immediately from heaven, she points to omnipotence, when she would account for the wonders which she holds forth, and demands from her children a sacrifice of that, which is the dearest to them, the sacrifice of their own lights and reasonings. The man of religion, therefore, is essentially a man of humility. Employing his reason for that for which it was given him, to arrive at the knowledge of the sovereign truth, he here stops, and seeing, that even in nature the works of God surpass his feeble powers, he pretends not to dive into secrets of a higher order. He hears, but to believe; and believes, but to obey.

Now, such being the spirit of the religion of Christ, it is

easy to conceive how nothing can form a greater obstacle to its diffusion than the spirit of pride. Survey the annals of all those dissensions which have at any time afflicted the Church of God; what were they in their commencement but the revolts of human reason against the humility required by Christ and his Church? What but the workings of human pride to enter into those secrets of providence which God, to give to his creatures the opportunity of a meritorious act of faith, has chosen to keep concealed? What, in their tenets, but an uninterrupted effort to exalt the empire of reason, to call down God to its tribunal, to approve and censure, to believe and reject, as man's limited intellect, or, rather, as his pride should allow. Believe, exclaims one, that only of which you can see the reason. Take, says another, the sacred volume, read, digest, examine its contents: judge for yourselves, interpret for yourselves, form, in fine, your own belief, your own morality, your own law. A third, reducing to something still less the sacrifice of the understanding, expresses his indifference to all belief; and, making the whole of religion consist in the practice of those moral virtues of which even pagan antiquity could furnish illustrious examples, he equivalently tells God that his revelations are useless; that faith is a superfluous virtue, and that the truths which the Son of God came on earth to teach mankind, and the belief of which he declares to be indispensable to salvation, are matters of indifference. Ah! Christians: who does not see that such an invasion of the prerogatives of the Divinity leads the way to that consummation of impiety, even the denial of the God of Truth. Yes! having once shaken off the yoke of dependence, what extravagance is there into which the human mind is not permitted to plunge! Revolting and discordant as have been the various systems that have occasionally sprung up, and attracted by their novelty or their licentiousness, they have invariably originated in that pride of the understanding which presumes to sit in judgment on the mysteries of God. Accordingly, if we examine the conduct of all who have signalized themselves by their opposition to the doctrines of Christ and his Church, we shall find that they were by no means exemplary for moderation, meekness, and humility: that they were far from being diffident of their own lights and reasonings:

that, on the contrary, they were proud, self-sufficient, haughty, presumptuous.

Nothing but humility can secure the integrity of faith. Supported by this great virtue, and raised above nature, the true hearers of Christ have ever maintained that unity of belief which distinguishes the Church of God from all those congregations that have separated from her communion. In her pale, indeed, we find men of all ranks, nations, characters, talents, and dispositions; men differing from each other in every other point, yet all united in the belief of the same essential truths. And whence is this? It is because she has ever considered the revelation made by God as out of the sphere of human reason. It is because docility of mind to the doctrines of faith has ever been her watchword. It is because the most learned of her doctors, the most celebrated among her teachers have ever submitted their own conceptions to the obedience of faith; knowing that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, and that it is written, *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject.* Faith, fellow-christians, is a gift of God; as we may place obstacles to its reception, so we may lose it when attained. If God has confided to us the precious deposit, let us be careful not to risk the loss of it by trusting to our own reasonings. A spirit of pride is, as we have seen, the greatest obstacle to the belief of the doctrines of Christ; it is also the greatest obstacle to the practising of his precepts.

Yes, fatal as has been the progress of impiety within our own recollection, I will venture to affirm, that less has been effected by attacking the dogmas than by throwing discredit on the precepts of Christ and the practices of his Church: that the principal danger to the true believer is not so much from the false reasonings as from the false maxims and seductive solicitations of error; in fine, that, of those who reject the authority of the Church, not so many are withheld by an indocility of mind from believing her doctrines, as by an indocility of heart from obeying her injunctions.

For, as we have already seen, the rules of conduct laid down by our divine Redeemer, were no less humbling to the pride of the heart than the truths which he revealed were to the pride

of the understanding. The Church of God, too, the faithful interpreter and follower of her divine Spouse, breathes throughout her precepts and her worship the same spirit of humility. Humbling in her precepts, she not only restrains and subjects to her dominion our actions, but assumes a control over our thoughts and desires. Humbling in her sacraments, she employs, according to the direction of her divine Founder, the common and lowly objects of nature to signify and convey the noblest gifts of Heaven. Humbling in her rites and ceremonies, she employs most frequently such as are contrary to the pride of man; such as may remind him of his total insufficiency and dependence, of the nothingness of his extraction, of the sinfulness of his origin, of the shortness and precariousness of his existence. Humbling, in fine, in her spirit and maxims, she pays no regard to the vain distinctions of genius, of title, or of wealth. She regards with the same eye the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, the strong and the weak, or, if any be the preference, she reserves it for those whom the world despises.

Here that spirit of pride, which I have already shown to be so inimical to the spirit of religion, again clashes with the precept of hearing Christ; acting now with no less fatal influence on the heart than it before acted on the understanding. Indeed the doctrines of religion rested on too secure a basis, and were too ably defended, to be shaken by the petty cavils and sophistry of men; and the proud but shallow abettors of irreligion would have found themselves single in their impious warfare, had they not been careful to emblazon on their standards the enchanting words, licentiousness and independence. Hence, the more easily to gain partisans among the multitude, while they held out promises of the most alluring nature, they were careful to attack, with every weapon of derision, of invective, and of calumny, the humbling observances of religion. The humiliating practices of self-denial and self-abjection, which ever formed so distinguishing a feature in the Church of Christ, as well as in the conduct of her divine Founder, were condemned as the offspring of superstition. Assertions, however pitiful and unsupported, are sufficient to make men reject that as false which they wish not to be true; and, in the hands of Providence, a blinded under-

standing is generally the punishment of a corrupted heart. Ask not, then, fellow-christians, any further reason why the religion of Christ should in every age have found opposition. Ask not that I should explain that mystery of the human mind which, though convinced, refuses to be persuaded, and why it is that the standard of error and infidelity still possesses so many adherents, though the doctrines of truth are on all sides so ably and unanswerably upheld. Rather let your attention be directed to a nearer and, if possible, a still more afflicting spectacle, the same spirit of pride possessing, ruling, destroying the very fold of Christ.

Yes, my brethren, while error and infidelity still possess so wide a sway, it were some consolation to the Church of God, could she behold her spirit of humility diffused among all those who make profession of her tenets. But oh, what a source is here of her affliction and her tears! Multitudes profess to believe her doctrines; but how small is the number of those who observe her precepts, who enter into her spirit, who follow her in her practices of humility and self-denial? Where, indeed, do we now behold those exercises of humble piety which ages of less splendor, but of purer virtue, so often exhibited, when the great and the illustrious thought it no disgrace to employ their own hands in the lowliest offices of charity? Whence does it happen, to bring a single instance from a thousand that might be adduced, that, at the humiliating ceremony with which the present holy season is introduced, the altars of religion are forsaken by the rich and great, and left to the humble and the poor? Whence does it arise, but from that pride of heart which dreads to be informed, and to give testimony of its nothingness and dependence? How many are there in these days, followers, indeed, in name, of a religion of humility, but who shrink and flee from every observance that is in the least revolting to the pride of the heart? I say little; how many are there who fear even to be thought actuated by her spirit; who, invited to break her precepts, equivalently deny that they are her children, and for fear of a momentary humiliation to which they falsely imagine a generous observance of their duty would expose them in the eyes of sinners, expose themselves to be eternally denied by Christ before his heavenly Father.

On you, great ones of the world,—you, whom riches and earthly consolations make most unlike your humble Redeemer,—on you the precept of hearing Christ, in the humbling duties which he imposes, is, in a peculiar manner, imperative. Surrounded by the false glare of the honors, riches, and pleasures of the world, strangers to the afflictions which Providence so wisely administers to those of an humbler sphere, you incur the greatest danger of being spiritually blinded, of forgetting what you are, the object for which you were created, and the end to which you are hastening. A faithful discharge of the humbling duties of religion might counteract the illusion, might tend to render you wise in that most important science, the knowledge of yourselves, and might even supply the want of those temporal crosses which create the nearest resemblance to Christ. Yet, here, alas! would it be rashness to assert that where the remedy is most wanted it is least applied? Is not docility of heart a virtue with which the rich and the great are least of all acquainted? Instead of meekly subjecting their hearts to the voice of religion, do they not seem to regulate their religion by the passions and propensities of their hearts? For what shall we say of that observance of religion by which depraved inclinations are neither corrected nor restrained? which leaves to vanity all its show, to sensuality all its indulgences, to self-love all its sensibility? What shall we say of that observance of religion which is ever raising obstacles and excuses, and shudders at every trifling inconvenience that may attend the service of God. Is there a question about some temporal interest, a question of fortune or reputation, what alertness and eagerness, what hurry and agitation, what vigilance and activity! Then is the heart docile, then are all obstacles surmounted, then do all difficulties disappear. When God is concerned, every thing is difficult, every thing is out of time; the moments pass slowly away, the work is undertaken with reluctance, and quitted with delight. What, in fine, shall we say of that piety which is ever occupied in finding the distinction between counsel and precept—which fears not to diminish the love of God, provided it does not arouse the last anathema of his wrath? What shall we term it but a piety of artifice, a piety of duplicity and pride, which dares to hold the balance between God and the world

between Christ and the passions,—which presumes to sit in judgment on his demands, and assign limits to his empire in the heart? The grosser and more base desires are to be immolated; the more refined passions, the more favorite inclinations, are to be excepted from the sacrifice.

Christians! the religion which you profess requires from you a docility of heart as well as of mind. The God whom you adore, has, through his whole life and doctrine, inculcated the same lesson. If, therefore, you would comply with the injunction in this day's Gospel, so formally given on mount Thabor, of hearing Christ, you must begin by checking every emotion of pride, both of the understanding and of the heart. Having had the happiness to know that Church, to which alone the Son of God has declared he will reveal all truth, and against which he has promised that the gates of hell shall never prevail, be careful to suffer no proud thoughts of opposition to arise against those truths, of which this Church is the depository. Acknowledge the wisdom of God to be above that of man, and, resting in this acknowledgment, carefully subject, as St. Paul expresses it, *every understanding to the obedience of faith.* Be careful, in the next place, to restrain and subdue the pride of the heart, by generously embracing those humbling duties which religion imposes, and by correcting every propensity and restraining every affection, that is not in accordance with the tenor of her precepts. If either of these species of humility be wanting, think not that you hear Christ, or will be heard by him. God himself has said: *Heaven is my throne, and earth my footstool; but to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and that trembleth at my words?*

Sermon XX.

The Third Sunday in Lent.

MOTIVES TO CONVERSION.

Behold now is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation.
2 Cor. vi. 2.

The inefficacy of the word of God at the present day, the feeble and scanty fruit which it is seen to produce, is a common subject of remark and complaint. The remark must be acknowledged to be but just, the complaint but too well founded. The evil is one of the first magnitude; but of its cause no part can for a moment be referred to the word of God itself, that two-edged sword, which cleaves the hardest rocks. Some part of it may doubtless be ascribed to the weakness and deficiency of the human hands that wield it: but unquestionably the great portion of the blame must rest with him to whom the powerful instrument of salvation is applied,—to his perverse, malicious, and impenitent disposition. Let it not be imagined, however, that it is altogether ineffectual, even in the worst of cases, or that the sinner, because he retires apparently unmoved from the word of God, derives from it no impression. I believe, this is seldom the case. The truths, which he hears, even when they receive no extrinsic advantage from the mouth which utters them, have in them a native force not easily withstood; they come home to his heart and bosom; they find an echo in his breast, which he would vainly attempt to suppress. They touch his dearest interests; they are his own, I may say; they are personal and independent of the individual who utters them. It is not to be conceived, that a being, who so essentially loves himself, can be so strangely indifferent to himself, or that, because he is uncon-

verted, he is therefore really undisturbed. No, the truth is, that he does feel, but that he carefully wraps up his feelings; he even conceives designs and resolutions, though he does not execute them: he does not act, but he intends to act; he is not converted, but he cherishes within himself the purpose of conversion, and intends one day to realize the idea. I believe this remark may be applied with justice to every audience; and I believe that it has a more extensive application than is generally imagined. It applies even in proportion to the just man: he knows the heavy task of perfection which he has upon his hands, and is ever resolving to commence it in greater earnest. It applies still more justly to the tepid and slothful Christian: he is well aware of his dangerous deficiency, and fully intends some day to awaken his dormant energies. But it applies with most force to the sinner: he feels, deeply feels the misery of his condition, and, to his own deluded mind, is ever upon the point of taking the final spring which is to extricate him from its abyss. To all these, then, but particularly to the last, the Church, at this season, raises her heaven-commissioned voice, and emphatically cries out, in terms the most inviting: *Behold now is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation.*

The sinner's idea of conversion is delusive and erroneous: his purpose weak, faltering, and inadequate. It is a mere half-will; he wills and he wills not. It has just so much of speciousness, as to keep him in a delusion, without having any of that real life, which will ever ripen it into effect. Yet, poor and insufficient as it is, the benevolent intention of the Church, at this time, is to animate, to invigorate, and to encourage it; and, by the aid of that divine and all-powerful grace, of which she is, on earth, the depository and the channel, to raise it to the happy fruit of an effectual conversion. My object is, simply, to second her pious wishes; for which purpose, I intend briefly to assemble together the chief motives to conversion, observing that, while I address myself more particularly to the sinner and to the slothful, whom it is not rash to expect to find in any fortuitous assembly, I also direct myself, in proportion, to every description of Christians; for, which of us will venture to pronounce himself uninterested and unconcerned in an exhortation to conversion?

The motives to conversion I shall distribute, merely for convenience sake, into two classes, the *past* and the *future*:—those motives which urge and incite us from the past, and those which impend and press upon us from the future.

From the eventful and instructive *past*, many motives rise up to urge us on to our conversion. Instead of adducing them in a series, I shall endeavor to imbody them under one or two heads. The first collection of motives I will comprise under what I will call your own personal experience.

In the first place, you have experienced the misery and the pain of sin. Had you not tried the experiment, had you not plucked the forbidden fruit, you might, with more excuse, be seen hesitating in your course. But you have, long since, made the unhappy trial, made it perhaps again and again, and under every form that your wayward appetite could suggest. For who is there, alas! that has not made an essay of one or other of the passions?—there are those, even, who have gone the round of them all. And will you refuse *now* to bear testimony that you have invariably found the truth of the expressive words of the apostle, *that the wages of sin are death?* and not only the death of the soul, of which perhaps you were less sensible, but the death of all your peace, of your internal comfort, of your essential happiness, and of all your good. Every prevaricating son of Adam has inevitably found it so; every blow struck at his innocence gives a simultaneous stab to his peace. Nor does his experience hold, only, of acknowledged and flagrant guilt; it applies, equally, to that less dreaded, but not less dangerous, state of mind, which is denominated tepidity. That diseased sickliness of soul does not fail to give evidence, feeling evidence, of its disorder: it makes, on occasion, the head and the heart equally know how dangerously remote it is from true rectitude. And now, let me ask, how is it that so much experience does not teach wisdom? How is it, that in every thing else disappointment never fails to undeceive, and here only stings in vain? that, in any temporal affair, an unsuccessful trial makes you recoil in haste from the attempt; and, in your eternal and only real interests, you are yet untutored by so many warnings? Is experience, then, only to be unavailing when only it can be solidly useful?

You expect, perhaps, that time will do much for you, and that you will derive benefit from delay; but you have already found the fallacy of such expectations: this is the second point of your personal experience. Go back for a few years into your life; retrace the fading impressions of former days, and compare yourself with yourself, what you were with what you are. If you are candid, you will find that you have undergone, in this respect, no material change; that you were, even then, hoping, and expecting, and waiting as you are now; that you had then the same ideas, or, if there is any difference, it is much to your present disadvantage; they were then new, and untried, and unconvicted; now they are stale, and unimpressive, and notoriously false. They served to amuse you, and they amuse you still; you have brought them along with you, you see, in your journey through life; and in the same condition, be assured, if you are not now undeceived, they will accompany you to its close. No, my friends, time will do nothing for those who will do nothing for themselves; there is nothing to be gained by delay in an affair like the present. What is to be done, must be done out of hand; must be now resolved, and now executed; every other idea is folly and delusion. *Behold now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation.*

A third experience, which you have derived from the past, is of the nature of your present existence, of its fleetingness and its uncertainty. Its fleetingness:—how rapidly does it pass away! You yourselves have now found it; it is one of your familiar observations. At the beginning of your course, perhaps, your eye was filled with the undiminished prospect; it seemed unbounded and exhaustless, and you rioted in the abundance of your leisure. But a few years have undeceived you; you now find that it was but a span, and that span most rapid in its contraction. Year after year is stealing from you; look now at the allotted sum of your years, how alarmingly has it diminished! many are afraid to look at the scanty remnant. Had you another life in reserve, this would not be so much: but your present existence is individual, like yourself. As you have but one soul, you have but one life to save it in; as you have but one eternity, you have but one day to earn it in. And, arrived as you are, I may say, at the eleventh hour of that day, with its

awful night visibly coming on, its dusk already, perhaps, beginning to fall around you,—*that night in which no man can work*,—how can you longer stand idle and hesitating, and neglecting your most vital interests? Reflect, whether you would be satisfied to meet the end of life in your present posture of soul.

The other quality of your present existence, which I said you had experienced, its uncertainty, brings you within the possibility and the peril of this. Yes, life is no less precarious than it is fleeting; and you have found it so. How many times have you been brought to the fatal verge? Who is there that, by sickness, accident, or some other of the thousand hazards that beset this frail and perishable existence, has not seen himself within a few moments of forfeiting it? What has happened may happen again; what before only threatened, may, the next time strike: and if it should now, let each individual ask himself whether he is prepared for the blow. I believe, none, but the exact and ever watchful saints of God, could confidently reply in the affirmative. It is because we all loiter in the great work of conversion. Let such a momentous uncertainty now, at least, awaken us to fervor, remembering that, *wherever the tree falls, to the north or to the south, there it shall lie*,—shall lie for all eternity. The sinner shall never be able to detract a single iota from the load of reprobation under which he expired, nor the saint ever be allowed to add a single particle to the amount of merit which marked his final hour.

Such are the motives from the past, comprised in your personal experience: your experience in regard of others forms another collection, which runs parallel with the former.

As you have felt in yourselves, so you have witnessed in others, the unhappy effects of sin, and of being at a distance from God. You have seen the wicked always miserable; you have seen the slothful and the prevaricating Christian always a stranger to true repose, bursting out perhaps, occasionally, into sallies of joy, but soon falling back again in pain upon himself; ever capricious, unequal, and dissatisfied, and evidently laboring under some internal disorder. While, on the other hand, you have uniformly observed the sincere and the fervent Christian a stranger to such unhappy vicissitudes, ever equal to himself, tranquil and cheerful, and, even in tribulation, *possessing his soul in peace*.

In the second place, as in yourselves, so in others, you have seen the effects of dilatory resolution. For such a disposition is not peculiar to you: all are more or less under the delusion; every man, perhaps, cherishes within himself a similar idea, an indistinct kind of hope, an undefined kind of purpose, that he shall one day be better. But whom have you ever seen converted by such a disposition? No. Any change that you have ever seen for the better, any real conversion was not the offspring of such feeble and fallacious resolves: it was the result of a determination, instant, ardent, and effectual, such as I would now induce you to adopt. If you have seen few such, it is because there are few conversions: the greater part of men die as they have lived. Their career is unmarked by any sensible change; life is to them a smooth, easy descent, down which they glide imperceptibly, carrying along with them a few faint hopes of better things, which serve to amuse them on their way, and then leave them in death, just as they kept them in life, unchanged and unconverted.

Finally, you have read, in the various fate of others, still more strikingly even than in your own life, its fleetingness, but particularly its uncertainty. For you have seen the premature blow, which only hung over you, actually fall upon others. How many do you now miss, whom, in the order of nature, you ought to see around you! How many of those, who started with you in life, or were even your juniors on the road, are now no longer reckoned among the living! They have long since disappeared from the earth; they have now no connection with it, except by the small remnant of undistinguished dust, which they have somewhere left behind them; they were once licensed tenants of the soil, like yourselves; but they were among the predestined number, who were to be cut off in the verdure of their stem, in the immaturity of their growth. And let me again warn you, that that number is not yet complete; that there are those now living, living and little expecting it, who are yet to be added to the list, who are perhaps flattering themselves, like you, with conversion, and will most assuredly die unconverted. Knowing this, and having seen it exemplified, and perhaps about to exemplify it next in yourselves, can you possibly want any further persuasion to open your eyes to your true interests, and to in-

duce you to hasten your conversion? All your knowledge of others, as you have seen, combines with all your personal experience, to form an impulse of motives from the *past*, which, one would think, must irresistibly urge you to action. To deepen the impression, the motives from the *future* now bring in their powerful assistance.

The first consideration which there meets us is, that all the hopes, and intentions, and resolutions which we form in respect of the future are notoriously fallacious, and almost ever terminate in impenitence. This I have already alluded to in another part, and shall here support by a celebrated sentence from one of the Fathers, the enlightened St. Bernard. In speaking on this subject, he has these striking words: *Hell*, says he, *is paved with good resolutions:* that is to say, the vast bulk of its unhappy inmates have carried down with them good resolutions; the wrecks of these well-meant, but fruitless resolves, cover the infernal abyss. The saying is terrible, my brethren, but just: and the more you consider it, the more you will feel its accuracy. For, is it to be supposed that they descended deliberately into that woful place? that they flung themselves intentionally into the dread abyss? Impossible! With the exception of a few miserable wretches, who died in despair, all the rest died resolving, resolving, as you are perhaps now resolving. They once expected a better fate; they had better ideas, better hopes, better prospects. They intended to have secured themselves, before the fatal term should surprise them, and perhaps had even taken a few steps: but, unfortunately, they waited, they lingered, they delayed, till it was too late; and the eternal night fell upon them, in the midst of their procrastination, and carried them down into the abyss with their unfinished resolves, to be now the matter of their everlasting despair. This must undoubtedly be the end of the vast majority of the reprobate: they die resolving, though impenitent. And thus is verified the terrible saying, that hell is paved with good resolutions.

In fact, in depending on the future, what does the sinner promise himself? Two things, which are entirely out of his power,—time, and grace.

First, the sinner, in depending on the future, calculates on time. But time is not his own; there is nothing less at his dis-

posal. It is dealt out to him in minutes, particles, moments, not one of which can answer for its successor. It is an invisible chain, the links of which adhere together only by contact, and fall asunder at a breath. The great Arbiter who holds it in his hand, is accustomed, as we have seen, to make examples of its brittleness, and to cut it short at the most unexpected moment,—more particularly in the case of the sinner; for *God*, says Solomon, *has given no man time for sinning*. Such is the frail support on which he suspends his designs of conversion.

But let us guarantee the future from every surprise, and give to life its full period: I still maintain that the sinner will not have time. He will have time for living, but not for repenting: with his unhappy disposition, he will still defer from day to day: with the sluggard in the Scripture, he will still cry out, *A little while longer, and a little while longer;* to the very last he will flatter himself, and be heard to say that there is yet an abundance of time, when every one who hears him will see that the last allotted particle of it is then in his hands. And thus, with all the plenitude of time before him, he will, in effect, be without time, and the longest life will no more avail him, than the most premature fate. This may appear incredible, and it is indeed a mystery in man; but a mystery, the existence of which common experience forbids us to question.

The second thing which the sinner promises himself, in his reliance on the future, is, if possible, something still less in his power. Give him time; give him length of time; give him an eternity, I may say! what is it, without grace? We are all too apt to forget, that the grace of God is the grand principle of all our good, and that we can do nothing without it; but the procrastinating sinner commits the greatest outrage on this truth, by making the extraordinary work of conversion dependent on his own will. He presumptuously says: Not now, not now, but another time I will be converted; wait a little, and, another day, I will turn to God and make my peace with him; daring thus to prescribe times and seasons to the Sovereign arbiter of all things, and to claim at will his independent grace.

The grace of God upon man is indeed abundant, but it is not unlimited; and on this subject religion teaches an important and awful truth, which it here becomes me to unfold. Every indi-

vidual receives that supernatural assistance which is necessary for his eternal well being: the sinner, among the rest, though he has rendered himself infinitely unworthy of such gratuitous aid, continues to receive copious and powerful graces, soliciting his heart, touching it with remorse, shaking it with dread, or soothing and inviting it by hope. That deep water, as the Scripture calls the heart of man, exhibits no such appearances on its deceptive surface; but the agitation is, for all that, secretly going on beneath. The heavenly stream of graces, however, when neglected and abused, has its termination: there is one of them, which will certainly be the last. It will be some inspiration, some alarm of conscience, some good thought suggested, for example, on an occasion like the present. It will have the same appearance as his former graces; and the sinner, accustomed to neglect, will heed it no more than he did them; but to him it will be final, it will be decisive, it will be fatal. From that moment, I may say, his reprobation is sealed: the saving stream is dried up, or at least comes to him only in scanty and measured drops. For I do not mean to say, that even now his communication with his Creator is entirely intercepted, or that he hereafter receives no graces. He still receives graces; but what graces? Feeble and ordinary graces: graces which might avail another, but are inadequate for him; graces which *might* convert him, but never *will*; which serve to justify the injured Creator, but leave the offending creature in his helpless impenitence.

This is an alarming truth, my brethren; but it is no less certain than terrible. It is founded on the essential justice of God: for, what can be more just, than that he, who will not hear, should no longer be spoken to? that he, who still retires from every approach, should be left to follow the unhappy path of his choice; and, after rejecting a thousand invaluable offers should find them, at last, irrevocably withdrawn? After that fatal moment, he will live on, unthinking and ignorant of the change which has taken place in his destiny; resolving, probably, as before, and occasionally, perhaps, wondering at the inefficacy of his own resolves; attributing it to the weakness of his nature, or the strength of his passions, or the peculiar difficulties of his situation in life, and not knowing the deep and fatal cause from which it springs. He will still, as before, be hoping better

things, and looking forward to the future, and fixing on some fancied epoch of greater facility for his conversion; and not know that to him the time is gone by, that he has passed the mark, that he has missed the critical goal of his salvation, to which there is no revealed instance of the sinner's return.

Yes, my brethren, this is the true explanation of the impenitence of thousands. It is not so much that they want time, or inclination, or even resolution; but that they want efficacious graces. Guilt preys upon them; remorse stings them; they feel, at intervals at least, the misery of their condition; they sigh and groan under it; the future hangs over them with all its terrors, to which they in vain attempt to shut their eyes:—in the midst of all this, they love themselves; they essentially seek their own happiness: that happiness is in conversion, and in conversion only;—they know it, they feel it, and accordingly they resolve. Yet, with all this, they are not converted, die unconverted, and crowd hell with impenitents and reprobates. How is this to be accounted for? The only solution of the problem is the awful truth which I have just explained: it is because they lost the critical moment of their salvation; because they abused and forfeited the last of their graces.

If, then, my brethren, in conclusion, if there be any one here present in whom the main object of this discourse meets its full application; if there be any one, in any circumstances, that this day hears the voice of God secretly calling him, let him be sure that he harden not his heart. Perhaps he may never have another opportunity of hearing the divine word, even externally; for who is not aware, and even ready to acknowledge that this may be his last Lent, and that when the Church militant shall the next time raise her penitential voice, he may be removed beyond its reach? But, even if he externally hears again the call of God, who shall secure to him the hearing of that internal voice which alone is efficacious to conversion? For *God speaketh once*, says the book of Job, *and repeateth not the second time.* In his name, then, and as the delegated minister of that Church which is his interpreter on earth, addressing myself to all who in any sense need conversion, I conclude in the words with which I began: *Behold now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation.*

Sermon XXX.

The Fourth Sunday in Lent.

ON ALMS-DEEDS.

And Jesus took the loaves: and when he had given thanks, he distributed to them that were set down. In like manner also of the fishes as much as they would.—JOHN vi. 11.

OUR divine Redeemer, by every public action of his mortal life, showed what his followers were to do when placed in similar circumstances: for he was the way, the truth, and the life, not only by word, but by example. This was verified in a very remarkable manner on the occasion mentioned in this day's Gospel. Fixing his eyes on the multitudes that followed him, and perceiving them destitute of food, he takes pity on them, and orders his disciples to give them refreshment. They, comparing the means at their command with the number of the distressed, hesitate, and attempt to check his benevolence by the supposed impossibility of carrying it into effect. *There is a boy here*, say they, *that hath five barley loaves and two fishes, but what are these amongst so many?* But our Saviour is not influenced by these considerations, suggested by worldly wisdom. He commands his disciples to cause the multitude to sit down, and to distribute the loaves and fishes amongst them: then, by an exertion of his omnipotence, he multiplies the food in their hands, so that, after the act of charity, their stock of provisions is greater than it was before.

The moral contained in this transaction is at once beautiful and striking. We are here taught, that the sight of the corporal necessities of our brethren ought to awaken pity in our bosoms; but a pity followed by exertions to relieve them as far

as we are able. We are taught that the scantiness of our means is not to check our hearts or close our hands; that if we really go as far as our power will carry us, divine Providence will interpose, in a wonderful manner, to second our endeavors; and that so far from being impoverished by our charities, we shall, on the contrary, entail a special blessing on our houses. In a word, our Saviour, by his conduct on this occasion, insinuates the grand precept of alms-deeds, and gives us an idea of the rewards which God bestows on those who comply with it; rewards which not only await us in heaven, but will be enjoyed during the present life. This same moral will form the subject of this day's discourse, in which, following the division I have mentioned, I shall, in the first place, treat of the origin and nature of the precept of alms-deeds; and, secondly, of the rewards, both temporal and eternal, which a faithful compliance with this precept will insure to us.

That there is an obligation incumbent on us by the divine law to relieve the distresses of our brethren, no Christian will call in question; for, of all our duties, none is more frequently mentioned in the word of God than this; none more strongly inculcated. But the real origin of this duty, its nature and extent, are not so generally understood; and therefore I shall endeavor to throw some light upon these subjects. For this purpose, I will take a cursory view of the ways of divine Providence.

Providence, as the word itself indicates, is the continued action of God, by which he maintains in being and directs to their respective ends the creatures that he has drawn out of nothing, providing them with whatever is necessary for these purposes. The operation of this Providence in regard to the inanimate and irrational part of the creation is strikingly wise and beautiful. *From the hyssop which comes out of the wall to the cedar which crowns Libanus;* and from the scarcely organized polypus to the half-rational elephant, we behold Providence watching over all beings with the affection and solicitude of the most tender mother, attending to all their respective wants, and impelling them forward invariably in the track in which they were created to move. Here reigns the most perfect harmony; here, whilst nothing is wanting to them in the various stages of their existence, nothing is superfluous.

Though, among the irrational animals, some are endowed with faculties which raise them above the others, and thus, in a certain sense, constitute all the gradations of states which we observe among men, yet no superiority brings with it any privilege as to the means of subsistence. Among them there are no rich, no poor. Divine Providence affords supplies of food and raiment as abundantly to the most insignificant and puny insect as to the noblest animal that ranges the forest. But how different is the scene which presents itself when we turn our eyes to man? Here we meet with nothing but confusion: and the conduct of God in providing for the subsistence of this part of the creation might seem, at first sight, neither beautiful nor wise. Thousands are supplied, not only with abundant means of subsistence, but with a superfluity of these means: they have not only what is sufficient to answer the exigencies of their respective conditions, but a residue, which lies dead on their hands. On the other side thousands, nay, tens and tens of thousands, are outcasts as it were of Providence, and perish in every form of misery, from the want of the common necessaries of life. And shall we say that God, whose paternal love is so equally distributed among the brute creation, is unjustly partial only in regard to man? Shall we say that He who condescends to deck in beauty the lily of the field, and to listen to the cries of the *callow ravens invoking him*, is inattentive to the exigencies of any of those creatures who bear his image, and are the noblest and most favored part of his works? No, my brethren: the *judgments of the Lord are just, justified in themselves*, and his conduct in regard to man, though more sublime, and therefore more elevated above our weak comprehension, is all beautiful, all wise, all harmonious. Were man, like the beasts, destitute of reason and liberty, and had he no other destination than the part he acts during his present life, then would God supply his necessities, as he does those of other creatures, by his own immediate action; then would there be no rich overloaded with abundance, no poor languishing in distress. But man has a principle within him adequate to the regulation of his own actions. He has a free and intelligent soul, and is therefore qualified for the more sublime control of moral laws. He is moreover immortal, and there is for him an awful hereafter, when he must

be called to an account, and punished for his neglect, or rewarded for his observance of those moral laws for which he is thus qualified. Wherefore, a Providence of a different kind was suited to him; a Providence, not consisting in a necessitating physical influence, like that which provides for the wants of brutes, but in the influence of precept on the part of God, and meritorious obedience to that precept on the part of man; a Providence, which, whilst it relieved our corporal wants, should administer matter for the display of virtue, and unite the various classes of society in the bonds of mutual dependence and love; in a word, a Providence, which, appointing man himself the depository, with respect to his fellow-creatures, of the means God has provided for their sustenance, should make him responsible for the manner in which he discharges this honorable commission.

This is the origin of the divine law which imposes on the rich the obligation of supporting the poor. This law is the operation of divine Providence with respect to rational creatures; being at once the means by which a provision is made for the subsistence of every one of them, and by which the sublime faculties of their nature are exercised and put to the test. The inequality, therefore, with which God distributes to man the means of subsistence, is not the effect of partiality, but of that admirable economy which it behoved him to establish amongst us during the period of our probation; and all the confusion which arises from this unequal distribution, is to be attributed to those who violate the great commandment with which it is accompanied.

From this view of Providence, the correctness of which no Christian can doubt, and which might be illustrated by innumerable passages from the Holy Scripture, would time allow, it is evident, that the superabundance of the means of existence, which some have in their hands, is not intended by God for them, but for others; and that they are his mere agents; appointed to succor those whom he has been pleased to leave without means at their own disposal. We are therefore, in reality, proprietors only of that part of what are called our riches, which is necessary for our own subsistence, according to our state of life; the whole residue belongs, in the eyes of God, that is, in very truth, to others; and consequently, when we withhold this residue

from the necessitous, for whose use God lodged it in our hands, we commit an act, not only of uncharitableness, but of injustice. *Thou shalt not steal* is a commandment which many opulent Christians imagine they never transgress, because they have nothing but what is their own, according to human law. But, my brethren, human laws take in only a very scanty portion of the objects comprehended in the divine law, and cannot give rights rejected by him, to whom the whole *earth belongs, and the plenitude thereof.* He, therefore, who, at his trial before the divine tribunal, shall be convicted of having retained what belonged to others, by the grand, eternal, and immutable law of Providence, of which I have been speaking, will be found guilty of a breach of the seventh commandment. Yes! he has lived and died in the guilt of theft, however free he may have been from other crimes; and, with thieves, he will be excluded from the kingdom of heaven.

How different are the views of Almighty God from those entertained by man! And perhaps on no subject do these views differ more than on the subject of riches. Man considers the goods which he holds by inheritance, or acquires by industry, as his own; God looks on them as a mere deposit. Man thinks himself authorized to spend these goods as he wills; God considers every farthing as iniquitously and unjustly appropriated, which is employed to any purpose whatever, not ordained by himself. Man in possessing riches, fondly imagines that he is the favored child of Providence, and thinks it but reasonable to neglect those whom God himself seems to have abandoned; God's tender and fraternal heart yearns equally over all his offspring, and, if he has left some without support, it is because he has committed them to the care of others, in whose hands he has placed abundant means for their use. Thus, in the eyes of God, the opulent possess no lawful advantage, even with respect to their present state of existence, over their indigent brethren. In fact, did man act as commanded by God, there would be no indigent. Did he expend on himself only that part of his goods which God has really given him, that is to say, which is necessary for his subsistence and rational comfort according to his state of life, and employ the whole residue on those for whose use it was intrusted to his administration, all conditions would

be substantially the same, however they might vary accidentally and in appearance.

I am sensible how very grating this doctrine will be to the greater part of those Christians who are in possession of riches. To be deprived of the darling satisfaction of contemplating as their own the treasures hoarded up in their coffers; to be told that their eye, in feasting itself on the sight of their redundant gold, is in reality deriving a gratification from injustice; to be informed, that, even when they liberally bestow alms, they are not acting generously, but only justly; to hear that the poor who surround them are co-proprietors with them of all they possess, and that, in humbly presenting their petitions, they are humbly begging only what is already their own. Ah, truths like these, I say, are grating to their feelings, and they are inclined to cry out with the Jews: *This saying is hard, and who can hear it?*

In fact, my dear brethren, few, very few of the rich do hear this saying, and therefore, as our Saviour declares, very few attain salvation. Great numbers of them lead what appear to be moral lives, and even seem to edify by their attention to the duties of religion. Great numbers, after passing their days in this external propriety of conduct, close their eyes seemingly in peace. But what has been the quality of their stewardship? Have they entered into the views of the great Master of their property, in its use and application? Standing now before his awful tribunal, are they found guiltless of every unjust appropriation? Are there on their souls no marks of the property of the poor, no signs of what belonged to the widow and the orphan? Ah, let their tables, which were loaded with superfluous dainties whilst their fellow-creatures in vain demanded from them the common necessaries of life, let their abodes, their equipages, their attire, in which luxury had exhausted all her refinements, whilst thousands shivered around them naked and houseless; let these circumstances be remembered, and we shall easily conjecture what answer will be found to the forementioned queries by him who is no exceptor of persons, and who places a superabundance in the hands of some, for no other purpose but to prevent distress among the rest of his children.

Having thus briefly considered the origin, nature, and extent

of the precept of alms-deeds, I will now proceed to the rewards which await those who comply with it.

I have already called your attention to the increased stock of provisions, which the disciples of Christ found in their possession, after they had distributed food to the multitudes; and have observed, that this is the short, but clear and energetic, language by which our Saviour assures us that liberality to the poor will not impoverish us, but, on the contrary, add to our store. Accordingly, all ages, from the beginning of the world, have witnessed the peculiar temporal benedictions which alms-deeds have entailed. In the old law, we have the remarkable instances of holy Job and Tobias. The former says of himself, that compassion grew up with him from his infancy; that he never denied the poor what they demanded of him; that he shared his own morsel with the little ones, and never made the eye of the widow wait. The latter, though poor, faithfully distributed to each one, according to his power; he fed the hungry, he clothed the naked. The faith of both these holy men was severely tried, and both were permitted for some time to experience all the rigors of poverty. But what is the conclusion of their story? That they became incomparably more opulent than ever, and that God showered down his blessings on their whole generations. Since the establishment of Christianity, history is full of examples of the same kind. For though, under the new law, temporal rewards and punishments seldom follow virtue and vice, because God now leaves us to the stronger influence of that great hereafter, which he has more fully presented to our view; yet he certainly has established an exception to this general rule, in favor of the virtue of charity.

Let us pause a moment to reflect on what has come to our own knowledge on this subject. We have heard and read of innumerable instances of profuse alms-deeds, and of persons who have been, if I may be allowed the expression, perfect spendthrifts in favor of the poor. We have heard of kings, who have exhausted their treasures, and of private individuals, who have expended the last heap in their granaries, the last farthing in their coffers, to relieve the distresses of their fellow-creatures. We have heard of numbers, who, after giving all they possessed, have not hesitated to load themselves with debts,

for the same charitable purpose. Even in our own times of diminished charity, examples have not been wanting of a similar profusion and liberality to the suffering members of Jesus Christ. And yet, can any of us remember a single instance, in which the sums, thus scattered among the poor, caused any temporal detriment to those who gave them? Has any one ever heard of a king bringing ruin on the state, or of a private individual blasting the prospects of his family, by alms-deeds? Where has been the distressed widow, the abandoned orphan, whose misfortune could be traced to the charity of a husband or a father? And is not all this an interposition of Heaven in favor of charity, similar to the multiplication of the loaves and fishes? The wonders wrought daily under our eyes by Providence strike us not with astonishment, says St. Augustine, because they are so frequent, and because they appear in a certain disguise; but are they, therefore, the less admirable? If we witness excessive expenditure in any other line but that of charity, we always expect the most calamitous consequences, and we fancy, that, in the track of vicious prodigality, we behold wretchedness, ruin, and despair. But, when we see the pious Christian lavish his stores on the poor with ever so great a profusion, we never tremble for his future lot, or for that of his family; and we never entertain the slightest apprehension that a man of this description will be abandoned, or that his seed will beg for bread. And what is this feeling, so universally spread, but a conviction, arising from experience, that there is something supernatural attending alms-deeds; that there is an invisible hand replenishing the coffers that have been emptied by beneficence, and that God himself is the prop of that house, the inhabitant of which is the support of the poor.

Yes, my brethren, liberality in alms-deeds is the most effectual method to ward off want from yourselves and families. This method you have never seen fail; but how often have you not witnessed the melancholy effects of avarice and hard-heartedness? View the wrecks of shattered fortunes, the fragments of fallen grandeur, which lie scattered around you; none of these is the record of acts of charity: but how many of them may remind you of the opposite vice? How many of them are the visible marks of malediction on those who loaded their

vessels with what belonged to the poor, and attempted to raise their buildings at the expense of the widow and orphan? Remember, that, *unless the Lord build the house, in vain do they labor who build it.* No industry, therefore, on your part, no skill, no plans of economy will insure to yourselves or offspring even the common necessaries of life, unless Heaven bestow its benediction; and this benediction you cannot expect, unless you are liberal to the poor.

But not on temporal rewards will the true Christian fix his eye when he distributes his charities; for he knows that these advantages, however great, as they terminate at the body, are nothing when compared with the smallest benefit which results to the soul. Let us, therefore, consider what God has been pleased to reveal respecting the spiritual effects of alms-deeds. Now, though the Old Testament is full of passages which display these spiritual effects in the strongest language; though we are there assured that alms can redeem the most atrocious crimes, like those of Nabuchodonozor; that there is such an opposition between alms and sin as to render it almost impossible they should exist in the same person; and, in fine, that hell can never expect within its gloomy precincts the man who distinguishes himself by charity to the poor; yet our notions are still confined till we come to the pages which record the sayings of our divine Redeemer. The manner in which he expresses himself quite overwhelms us with astonishment, and presents to our minds a miracle of love that will bear comparison with his incarnation itself.

Who can conceive the great Source of being wandering through the world in a state of indigence; the absolute Lord and Master of all things an humble petitioner for a morsel of bread! And yet such is the case, according to the express declaration of Jesus Christ. You have been accustomed to be struck with amazement at the humiliations to which our Saviour subjected himself during his mortal life, but are in the habit of supposing that these humiliations all ceased at the moment of his glorious resurrection. Oh! you made a false estimate of the qualities of your Redeemer! His tender concern, not only for our souls, but also for our bodies, has forced him into a state of humiliation, which will continue as long as the world.

Let us attend to the account which he gives us of the sentence to be pronounced at the last day: *Then shall the King say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father; possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you clothed me. Then shall the just answer him, saying: Lord, when did we see thee hungry and fed thee; thirsty and gave thee to drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and took thee in; or naked and clothed thee? And the King answering, shall say to them: Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to any one of these little ones you did it to me.*

Here, then, is the incomprehensible love of which I spoke. Here we see Jesus Christ, the eternal self-sufficient Deity, identified with the most abject, the most forlorn of his creatures, and transferring to his own infinitely august person all the miseries and degradations of their unhappy condition. Consequently, my brethren, it is not man, but Jesus Christ, who knocks at your door, and presents his humble petition for the crumbs that fall from your tables! It is Jesus Christ who exposes to your pity his shivering limbs, and begs at least a useless castaway of your garments for his covering. It is Jesus Christ who stands with his head humbly cast down in the presence of your magnificent abodes, and presumes to represent to you that he has not *where to lay his head*, and therefore begs you to afford him the poor protection of a shed to shelter him from the rigors of the season. Christians, can you refuse him? But do not imagine that it is my object to excite your feelings of compassion for the poor; no, I wish rather to call your attention to the incomprehensible honor conferred on you when God places in your hands the means of bestowing alms-deeds: an honor which to a generous soul is the greatest of all the rewards of charity. Yes, rich ones of the world, your condition is truly noble, truly enviable, not because you can trace your pedigree to an insect of the earth who happened to be somewhat distinguished among his fellow insects; not because you possess more wealth than you can expend on your own necessities, but because you have it in your power to oblige the King of Kings

and the Lord of Lords. Let us suppose some mighty monarch of this world disposed to act towards any of his subjects as Jesus Christ acts towards us. Let us suppose that, from any excess of benevolence and condescension, he stooped to become a petitioner for some trifle which they possessed. Who would not wish to be the favored person selected by him for such an exercise of goodness? Who would not envy the fortunate man who should thus have it in his power to confer a favor on his sovereign? Ah, my brethren, had we a lively faith, did we view the poor in the character which they really bear, how incomparably greater in our eyes would be the honor attending alms-deeds? Then should we never rebuff the miserable from our presence with harshness and disgust; we should ever treat them with all the courtesy due to their exalted rank.

But Jesus Christ, in this conduct, has in view not only to confer an ineffable dignity on works of mercy, but to make them the occasion of all our good. For, by thus condescending to become our petitioner, he throws in our way the means of attaching and binding him to us, and, as I may say, of forcing him, by the very laws of generosity and honor, to exercise his munificence in our regard. Even miserable mortals, if gifted with any degree of greatness of soul, never stoop to receive favors from their inferiors, except from motives of benevolence. If they receive from them, it is that they may give, and give in a manner worthy of their superior condition. But what is the generosity of any child of Adam compared with that of Jesus Christ? In him benevolence and generosity are not limited qualities, as they are in us, but essential and infinite attributes. They do not merely adorn his character, but constitute him. In a word, he is benevolence itself, generosity itself. What return, then, is he not disposed to make to them whom he permits to become his humble benefactors? St. Leo, when he considers the mystery of the incarnation, cries out: *Oh! Christian, be sensible of thy dignity, and having become a participator of the divine nature, return not to thy ancient baseness by a degenerate life.* With equal reason may I exclaim, when I consider the nature of alms-deeds: Oh, ye rich ones of the world, oh, you who have it in your power to exercise works of mercy to the poor, and thus confer favors on Jesus Christ, be sensible

of your happiness, and be not so blind to your interests as to suffer him to appeal to your liberality in vain.

After these observations, it would be quite superfluous to enumerate, in detail, the spiritual effects of alms-deeds. For, if you bear in mind, that Jesus Christ himself is the object of your charities; that he not only commands these deeds from his throne of glory, but condescends to solicit them in the garb of poverty on earth; if you reflect on his intentions in your regard, when he is pleased to knock at your door; if you consider his infinitely noble, infinitely generous heart, and the power which he possesses of carrying into effect all its purposes: bearing all this in mind, you cannot fail to have a juster and more comprehensive view of the rewards of alms-deeds, than can be presented by the amplifications of oratory.

Moreover, by reflecting on these circumstances, you cannot be at a loss to understand why our Saviour, at the last day, will appeal to the practice of alms-deeds as the grand criterion by which to decide our eternal doom. In fact, Jesus Christ cannot but pass a favorable sentence on the charitable. For, how can infinite benevolence fail to be merciful to those who have been merciful to him? To be liberal to those, of whose liberality himself has participated? And what less than an eternity of riches can be adjudged to him, who, though he bestowed but little, bestowed that little on God? But, on the contrary, what can those expect from Jesus Christ, on the same awful occasion, who shall have lived and died in the violation of the precept of alms-deeds; who proudly despised the honor which he conferred on them in deigning to become their suppliant? Shall he now accept their crouching and reluctant homage? They rebuked him from their doors:—shall they now be called to him in the clouds of heaven? They denied him a morsel of bread and a cup of cold water:—shall he now admit them to the luxuries of his table, and inebriate them with the torrent of his delights? They steeled their hearts against him, when he displayed before their eyes his tattered garments:—shall he now clothe them in the robes of glory? In a word, he applied for the mere superfluity of their stores, he asked nothing from them but what lay redundant in their hands, and he was refused:—shall he now pour into their bosoms the riches of his mercy? Go, *go*, *ye*

cursed, he shall say, *into everlasting fire;* and all heaven, and earth, and even hell itself, shall adore the justice of the sentence.

That we, my brethren, may not be the objects of this dreadful but infinitely holy sentence, let us, while we have the opportunity, establish a claim on the favor of our Judge, by our liberalities to the poor. But let us ever bear in mind, that this claim can arise from those liberalities alone which are directed to Jesus Christ. Him, not man, we must contemplate in every necessitous brother. A liberality, arising from the natural feelings of benevolence, may call forth the applause of the world, and perhaps, as St. Augustin insinuates, be followed by some recompense affecting our present momentary state. But acts of this kind will not be registered in the book of life, nor be rehearsed to our glory at the last day. The praises of Jesus Christ will be bestowed on those only who shall have loved him; and the eternal riches at his disposal will be awarded to none but those who shall have proved their love for him, by freely giving their temporal goods to their distressed brethren for his sake.

And that you may be of the happy number of those who at the day of Judgment shall be honored and rewarded, as the benefactors of Jesus Christ, is a blessing which I sincerely wish you.

Sermon XXII.

Passion Sunday.

ON GRACE.

He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.—JOHN viii. 47.

CONSIDERABLE must have been the crime which could draw from our divine Redeemer so strong a censure. In pronouncing of the Jews that they *are not of God*, he contradicts all the lofty notions which they so fondly entertained respecting their own pre-eminency with Heaven; he declares that they have forfeited the promises which had been made to their fathers; and that they are henceforth to consider themselves as a people abandoned by God and devoted to malediction. So sensible, indeed, were they of the stinging reproach, that, regardless of the sanctity of the place in which they stood, they first vented their feelings in abuse, and at length proceeded to personal violence. *Do we not say well*, they exclaim, *that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* This their indignation could not alter or weaken, its only tendency was to justify and confirm the truth of our Redeemer's words.

But how, it may be asked, had the Jews merited this severe reprobation? On this very occasion, they had in crowds, early in the morning, hastened to listen to the words of Christ. At other times they thronged the public ways, and in prodigious multitudes followed him, even into the desert. How, then, justify the rigorous judgment pronounced upon them for refusing to hear the word of God? The difficulty, my brethren, is of easy solution. The Jews had listened, it is true, to the instructions of our divine Redeemer; but they had refused to profit by them: they had beheld his miracles, but they had refused to

yield to conviction; they had on all sides received proofs of the truth of his mission, their hearts had been visited by a thousand secret inspirations; yet they still persisted in their blindness and obduracy. This their refusal to profit by the graces which they had received was the crime, the heinousness of which is now so strongly insisted on by our divine Redeemer. But are we to imagine, that in thus pointedly marking his reprobation of the conduct of the Jews, our Lord had nothing further in view than their amendment and conversion? And is not the tone of severity which is this day employed by the meekest of men, intended to convey to us an important lesson? Undoubtedly, and the object of it is to give us a just and elevated idea of the value of the graces which we receive from God, and to inspire us with a salutary fear of being wanting in our correspondence to them. What, then, is the nature of divine grace, and what are the punishments which attend its abuse? The answer to these two important questions shall form at once the subject and the division of my discourse.

Of all the doctrines which religion presents to man, none is more humbling, none more consoling, and none more important, in the consequences which it involves, than is that of divine grace. Grace is defined a supernatural and gratuitous gift of God, granted to man, through the merits of Christ, with a view to his sanctification. Considered as permanently possessing and perfecting his soul, it is called habitual; considered as enlightening his understanding and moving his will, it is termed actual grace.

Man is necessarily a dependent being. Depraved in all his powers, he cannot of himself attain to the sublime end for which he is created. Entirely resting upon God for his corporal preservation, he is equally dependent on him for his spiritual well-being. In the duties, by the observance of which he is to arrive at eternal life, he sees obligations which the utmost efforts of unassisted nature could never enable him to fulfil. By no means master of his own heart, he in vain strives to fix and bind its affections to invisible goods; rebellious and grovelling, it will incessantly return and wanton on objects congenial to its own earth-born nature. In vain are the great truths of religion announced to his ear; in vain does eloquence exhaust itself in

depicting the comeliness of virtue, the deformity of vice, the greatness of the rewards to come, the terrors of a miserable hereafter, if divine grace pierce not his heart, if God himself speak not within him. He may admire the doctrines which he hears; his reason may assent to their truth; he may be even possessed with a desire of practising what is inculcated; but all will terminate in virtues of a natural order. His soul will be still unenlightened by divine faith, destitute of divine hope, a stranger to the virtue of divine charity. Seeing, he will not see; and hearing, he will not understand.

Such, my brethren, is the first view which the doctrine of divine grace presents to man of his own insufficiency. Of himself, absolutely destitute and powerless, he cannot rise to the lowest degree of a supernatural virtue. In the gloomy region of death, in which he is engaged, he lies a paralyzed and stiffened corpse, and before he can take a single step towards his celestial country, it is necessary that a ray of the great Sun of Justice invigorate his members and enlighten his path. Yes! In the multitude of the saints, who now crowd around the throne of the Most High, there is not one who does not owe to divine grace all the triumphs for which he is crowned. Grace it was which gave value to the martyr's sufferings; worth to the anchoret's austerities; merit to the virgin's chastity. Unaided by this all-invigorating principle, their heroic deeds might have excited the admiration of men, might have been recorded on the perishable monuments of earth, but could never have been inscribed on the pillars of the heavenly Jerusalem; and, therefore, to God alone do they incessantly refer the glory of all things, acknowledging him to be not less the author of their victories than the bestower of their rewards. And, in fact, of all the species of homage which the creature owes to the Creator, none is more indispensable, none more absolutely demanded of him, than such an acknowledgment. For, as it is infinitely greater and more glorious to be Lord of the world of grace, than of nature, it is here principally that God is jealous of the honor which is his due. Beware, then, O man, of attributing to thyself, to thine own merits or exertions, any of the good which thou seemest to possess. Beware of exalting thyself, in the conceit of thine own excellence or perfection. If

there is any thing real, any thing sterling in thy virtues, know that this is not attributable to thyself, but is the gratuitous gift of Heaven. What is there, that thou hast not received? Had the illuminating ray of divine grace been withheld from thy soul, the darkness of error and of sin would for ever have encompassed thee; were it now to be withdrawn, there is not in the black lists of depravity a single criminal whom thou mightest not surpass in guilt.

But, if the doctrine of grace be humbling to the pride of man, it is, on the other hand, calculated to fill him with hope and consolation. In directing us to God, as the author and source of all good, it directs us to a Being, whose liberality towards us is as unbounded as his power; to a Being, whose goodness and mercy are above all his works; to a Being, who pursues with benedictions even those who offend him; to a Being, whose anger has been disarmed, whose treasures of mercy and of grace are opened, and made accessible to us by the resistless appeal of the blood of his Son. Yes! the stream, which flowed from the wounds of our dying Redeemer, has brought riches and abundance among us; has diffused fertility over this our barren exile, and has copiously strewed the path of our pilgrimage with the means of nutriment and support. Incalculable are the favors which, from the commencement of our existence to the present hour, we have received from heaven, through the efficacy of this sacred blood. Born children of wrath, slaves of the devil and of sin, we were, by the grace of baptism, restored to the dignity of children of God. In the other sacraments, those miraculous channels of divine grace, how adequately are all our wants prevented or supplied; our infirmities cured, our evils redressed, our poverty enriched! Have we prevaricated and offended? In the sacrament of penance, our heavenly Father offers us mercy and forgiveness. Are we struggling with afflictions, troubled with temptations, harassed by the strength and number of our spiritual enemies? *Come to me*, he exclaims, in the sacrament of love, *and I will refresh you.* Not content with dying for our ransom, he would still be with us to support and encourage us; would daily renew the scene of Calvary upon our altars; would for ever be our High Priest, our food, and our sacrifice. *Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me; thou hast prepared*

a table before me against them that afflict me; and my chalice which inebriateth me, how goodly is it! Even on the bed of sickness, even in the midst of the perils of death, when the world abandons us, God comes to our relief, provides us with support and with strength, and pours the balm of hope and consolation into our dying bosoms. If, from the general view of the effects of the divine bounty in our regard, we descend to a more particular detail of the graces with which we have been individually enriched, how multifarious, how innumerable do they appear! Even when you fled from God, even when you outraged and provoked him by sin, his tender mercy was incessantly recalling you to repentance and pardon. In the midst of your prevarications, did you ever feel within you emotions of apprehension and alarm? It was his divine grace, which then secretly spoke to your heart. In the midst of vanity and dissipation, have you been surprised by some sudden calamity? Did the loss of one dear to you give rise to serious reflections? Did sickness or accident recall your thoughts inward, and remind you of your mortality? These events were so many messengers from heaven, sent to bring you to repentance. The holy examples, by which you have been instructed and moved, the reproaches of conscience, which you have felt, the good resolutions, with which you have been inspired, the salutary terrors, which you have experienced, when the divine judgments have been displayed before you, the motives of hope and consolation, which religion has so often held up to your view, are all only the varied means employed by God for your conversion. Oh, sinners! if you are still unchanged, say not that the graces of heaven have been wanting. These have increased and multiplied with the years, with the days of your existence. God has invited and threatened, encouraged and reproved. If you are still unmoved, unenlightened, the obduracy of your own hearts it is which perpetuates your darkness and your misery.

And here, my brethren, is the next important consideration with which we are presented in the doctrine of divine grace. It is, that this so necessary, so abundant, so inestimable a gift may be abused. Though God perpetually invites, solicits, urges, he still leaves us free to follow or reject his heavenly inspirations. Utterly unable to effect any good without him, we still

possess the fatal power of evil. Gifted with a temporal existence without our own concurrence or consent, we are taught to expect the life of a glorious immortality on quite other conditions. Here, the boon must be merited before it can be possessed; and how shall we merit it, unprofitable servants as we are, but by diligently following and obeying the inspirations of heaven? God gives us his grace. If we yield to its first impulse, if we carefully listen to his solicitations and follow his calls, he will supply us with new light and with new strength. Raised above ourselves, above the world, the flesh, and the devil, we shall courageously walk in the way of his commandments. Grace will dissipate all the difficulties which had at first seemed to cross our path; will cause flowers and verdure to spring up as we advance, until the beautiful and spacious region of a glorious eternity, breaking upon our view, will at last recompense our fidelity and repay our toils. Thus it was with the saints of God. Subject to the same passions, the same infirmities, the same temptations as ourselves, they were made, by grace, superior to all. Faithful in their correspondence, they gave themselves up to all its holy emotions; they exchanged their own weakness for the strength that is from above; they were enabled to fight the good fight, and now possess the crown of justice. Yet, these inspirations they might have opposed. The moment of grace, once lost, might not have returned. God, whose voice they would have disregarded, might in turn have refused to call; others, more faithful, might have borne away the triumphs destined for them, and other brows might now be decked with their crowns.

Such, my brethren, is a short view of some of the most material points which faith teaches us on the subject of divine grace; or, to say all in a few words, grace is a gift absolutely necessary for us in order to salvation. It is a gift gratuitously and abundantly offered us on the part of God. It is a gift which we are free to profit by or to reject. The next question that occurs is, what are the consequences by which the abuse of divine grace is generally followed?

Of all the chastisements which God ever inflicted upon man, none, perhaps, is better calculated to give us an idea of the severity of his judgments on the wilful abuse of grace than that to

which I have already alluded,—his desertion and reprobation of the Jews. Enlightened above all the nations of the earth with the knowledge of the true God, and taught to consider themselves his chosen people, they received, during many ages, the most singular marks of the divine predilection. Their wants were miraculously supplied, their petitions heard, their enemies subdued, and a land flowing with milk and honey was given them for their abode. God, in some measure, even familiarized himself with them. He condescended to be their lawgiver, to display on occasions before them the visible signs of his presence, and to make them the depositories of the most magnificent promises. When they prevaricated and sinned, he repeatedly received them into favor. In all their murmurs, in all their acts of disobedience, rebellion, and treason, he still regarded them with the eye of a compassionate Father. He admonished, it is true, he threatened, he chastised; but only with a view to bring them to repentance. On their return, he ever accumulated fresh favors upon them, and seemed entirely to have blotted out the memory of their transgressions. Thus does their history present a constant series of favors and of offences, of pardon and of treachery, of graces given, and of graces abused. The measure of their iniquity was, however, to be at last filled up. God, from the exercise of his mercy, was at length to pass to that of his justice, and the fatal transition was marked and foretold in a memorable passage of the Prophet Isaiah: *My beloved*, says the inspired monitor, *had a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place, and he fenced it in, and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof, and set up a winepress therein, and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ye men of Judea, judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more for my vineyard, that I have not done to it? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes? And now I will show you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will make it desolate: it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged, but briers and thorns shall*

come up, and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel; and the man of Juda his pleasant plant, and I looked that he should do judgment, and behold iniquity, and do justice, and behold a cry. The meaning of this allegorical threat could not be mistaken; it was repeated in still plainer terms by other prophets, and our divine Redeemer and his precursor St. John gave notice of its proximate execution. Still the men of Juda continued in their perversity: they rejected the great final call of Heaven, and the curse with which they had been so long menaced began to operate. Cast off from God; blinded in the most striking manner; insensible to the clearest testimonies; unconverted even by the evidence of their own calamities; they are scattered over the earth, bearing about with them, to all ages and to all people, the visible proofs of the divine malediction. *As it is written*, says St. Paul, *God hath given them the spirit of insensibility, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, until this present day.* But, my brethren, while you are struck with this signal instance of the divine judgments, do you imagine that it stands alone? that the Jews are altogether singular in this their dereliction? that God is not still the same? and that the same causes will not still produce the same effects? Cast your eyes over the Christian world: what do you everywhere behold but judgments, less striking, perhaps, but not less dreadful and severe, with which an irritated God still visits those who, like the Jews, have persisted in abusing his grace? Men given over to their passions and lusts, men without faith, without charity; men wise in worldly wisdom, but blind to their eternal interests, abandoned to a reprobate sense, forgetful of the world to come, their attention exclusively occupied on earth and its airy dreams. Though the most powerful means are employed by religion to arouse them, though the terrors of God's judgments are displayed before them in the most awful terms; though hell yawns beneath them, though death, in smiting those around them, is unceasingly presenting them with admonitions of their own danger; all is fruitless. In spite of their own reason, of their own conviction, they still rush on to destruction; idly play on the edge of the precipice, and heedlessly follow the track which they know has led others, and will, if they continue to pursue it, lead themselves to perdition. And what is

all this, my brethren, but a counterpart of the judgments which God has inflicted on the Jews? Like the Jews, they have refused to obey his calls, have abused his graces, have disregarded his threats, and on them, too, has it been pronounced, *Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow down their backs always.* God, provoked by their long and obstinate resistance of his solicitations, at length abandons them to the hardness of their own hearts, and refuses to supply them with those efficacious graces by which alone they can hope to be converted. And, indeed, what can be more just than such a judgment? When the Most High offered, nay, pressed them to accept his graces, they equivalently told him that they needed not his help. They have said to God, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Most justly, then, is their impious desire accomplished. Most justly are they at length abandoned by Him whom they themselves have so often rejected. *They loved a curse, and it shall come unto them; and they would not have a blessing, and it shall be far from them.* And what a dreadful state, my brethren! But would you hear from the mouth of God himself his threats and maledictions upon them. *I have called,* does he say, *and you have refused to hear; I have stretched out my hand, and you have not regarded; you despised all my counsels, and neglected my reprehensions; therefore, I also will laugh at your destruction, and mock when that which you feared shall come upon you.* My justice, so long provoked, shall then be heedless of your cries. Your late and imperfect repentance shall not move me. *You shall call upon me, and I will not hear. You shall say to me: Lord, Lord, and I will answer: I know you not. The time is now come when your enemies shall encompass you, and straiten you on every side, and beat you flat to the ground.*

Here let human reason bow in silence to the decrees of eternal wisdom, nor presume to scrutinize further the ways of him who judgeth justice. For us, my brethren, suffice it to know that divine mercy has its times and seasons; and that, though infinite in itself, it has limits for the sinner, who wilfully abuses it. God grows wearied, as the Scripture says, and his outstretched arm is withdrawn. Twice did the wicked tribe of Benjamin triumph in its unholy cause; the third time it is given up to desolation. Sodom long prospered in its iniquity; ten just men are

no longer found in it, and it is consumed by fire from heaven. After a certain measure of crime, the mercy of the Lord is converted into indignation. *We would have cured Babylon*, does he say, *but she is not healed; let us forsake her.*

But enough of Babylon, enough of the world; the world, by whatever name it goes, whether a pagan, a Jewish, or a Christian world, has long been judged and condemned. Let us turn our thoughts only upon ourselves. Let us consider ourselves as distinct, as emancipated from the world. We must really be so, if we would be saved. Regarding no one but God and ourselves, let us apply to our own case the truths which we have been considering; they now become awfully interesting. Let no one here present consider himself unconcerned; we have all received grace; we shall all be one day called to account for the manner in which we have employed it: and oh! that the scrutiny which we are now to make into our conduct may conduce to save us in that day. Let each one, then, say to himself with me: It is now many years since I received the first grace from God. Without any merit of mine, I was enlightened with the true faith, in preference to millions of others, who, by an inscrutable judgment of God, have been left in darkness. From that time to the present, innumerable are the graces which I have received from God. Repeatedly have I been visited with the most lively inspirations and the strongest calls. At this moment, I have been upbraided by the voice of conscience; at the next, urged and pressed by the powerful motives of hope, fear, and love, which religion set before my view. Now has the poisonous cup of pleasure been imbittered on my lips, that I might cease to drink; now has sickness forced upon my unwilling eyes the ghastly image of death; now has the near spectacle of it, in a friend, or a relative, informed me of the nothingness of the objects which I too eagerly pursued. Again and again, have I assisted at the holy sacrifice, the mystic death of my Redeemer. Repeatedly have I been admitted to the sacraments, and fed with the bread of angels. All my life presents but a chain of graces, a succession of helps, a repetition of warnings. There are in heaven saints, who during life possessed less advantages. Hell encloses victims actually enduring torments for the abuse of fewer graces. Yet how have *I* corresponded? What has my life hitherto been, what is it at

present? Where is the fruit of so many confessions, so many communions, so many good inspirations? Where is the effect of the good examples which I have beheld, of the moving truths which I have heard, of all the admonitions which I have received? Is not my soul still a barren tree in the vineyard of the Lord? Have I yet acquired solid virtue? Am I animated with a real and ardent love for God; a sincere charity for my neighbor; have I a due horror of sin, a constant and effective desire of justice and perfection? After so many self-examinations, in which I have made these or similar affections, have I yet vanquished my passions, or corrected my defects? Am I more punctual in my duties, more humble, more mortified, more devout? And what is to be expected if I still continue to neglect and abuse the favors of heaven? My faith informs me, that, without grace, I cannot be saved; that grace is a gift perfectly free and gratuitous on the part of God. I know that the measure which I am to receive of this all-necessary grace is limited, and that, should that measure be completed without a correspondence, God will then withhold those powerful helps, by which alone my heart would be effectually changed; more than this I know not. How distant, or how near the fatal term may be, is an impenetrable secret. Perhaps the allotted number is already nearly completed. Perhaps the rejection of another grace, is all that is wanting to consummate my reprobation. Perhaps this may be the last call which God in his mercy may intend to give me. Perhaps the axe is already laid to the root of the tree, and the dreadful sentence is beginning to be pronounced: *Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?*

My brethren, if at these reflections you do not fear, I certainly tremble; I tremble for you, I tremble for myself. Yet are they no more than reflections authorized, nay, suggested and detailed in the word of God. Here nothing is exaggerated; nothing to be put to the account of human art or imagination. The truths which you have heard are simple and unadorned; the consequences drawn from them obvious and undeniable. *Wo, then, to thee, Corozain; wo to thee, Bethsaida; for if in Tyre and Sidon the mighty works had been done, that have been done in you, they would long ago have done penance in sackcloth and ashes.* Wo, then, to thee, tepid Christian; wo to thee, who per-

sistest in abusing the graces that are afforded thee; it shall be more tolerable in the day of retribution, for the infidel and for the pagan, than for thee. In that day, shall these rise up in judgment against thee, and loudly declare, that had the graces, which have been lost upon thee, been communicated to them, they would long since have been converted to the Lord their God. But what am I saying? Shall the infidel and the pagan be the only ones that shall appeal in that day to the divine justice against thee? No! In the very person of thy Judge thou shalt behold still more weighty appellants. His wounds, still visible, shall confront thee. The blood which once streamed from them, which has every day mystically streamed upon the altar to purchase thee grace, shall now demand usury for the purchase. Destitute and trembling, what shalt thou reply? To others, these wounds shall announce mercy and forgiveness; to thee, too, they shall speak, but they shall speak daggers to thy heart. My brethren, I have only one word to add; it is to entreat you, after you retire from this sacred abode, not to suffer the impression which these awful truths may make upon your minds, to be transient. Entering into your chambers, again calmly and attentively revolve them. Consider the value of the graces, with which you have been favored: calculate the account which you will have to give of them hereafter. Scrutinize your past conduct. Rigorously examine what has been your correspondence to all the graces which you have received. If your conscience condemn you, ponder well and anticipate the consequences of continuing to abuse them. Think what would be your situation were God to leave you, were he to cry to you, as he did to Saul: *Because thou hast rejected my word, I have rejected thee;* think, oh think, what will be the horrors of your soul, when, fluttering on the edge of eternity, it shall behold all the favors which it has received from heaven, now standing forth as the evidence of its guilt, and the strongest proofs of the mercy of the Most High turned into so many prognostics of reprobation.

O God, enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified. Look not upon our past delinquencies, but have regard to thy mercy. Grant that we may never fall under that last dreadful stroke of thine indignation. And, whatever other chastisements we incur, let this, at least, be averted.

Sermon XXXIX.

Palm Sunday.

THE SEVEN WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

My Father, if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, thy will be done.—MATT. xxvi. 42.

THESE are the concluding words of this day's liturgy. The exulting hosannas, which gladdened its commencement, die away by degrees, and at length give place to sighs of condolence and the meek accents of humble resignation. The Church hastily represents the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem, and then, in the spirit of her divine Spouse, who entered the city in triumph, to denote his eager desire to accomplish the great object of his coming, she turns at once to Gethsemani and to Calvary, anticipating the anniversary of the crucifixion. I think, therefore, that I shall best co-operate with the intentions of the Church, by directing your thoughts to the passion of your Saviour, limiting myself, however, to its close, to the powerful and interesting catastrophe. The last moments of every man are interesting, infinitely so to himself, but not a little so to his fellow-mortals; but the last moments of the great and the celebrated have a particular power over the human mind. Hence, their every sign, motion, gesture, is carefully noted; their actions are minutely detailed, and all their words studiously collected and treasured up for posterity. It will be worth our while, therefore, to attend the dying moments of this extraordinary personage; to observe each particular of his deportment, and to catch every accent that shall fall from his lips. In the peculiar situation, indeed, in which we shall contemplate him, it will be obvious, that his words will form the chief incidents of the scene;

and to these, therefore, I mean particularly to point your attention. Several remarkable speeches are recorded of him, as he hung in his last painful posture; speeches, we may be sure, not accidental nor unpremeditated, but carefully prepared and stored with meaning. These, then, will suit our purpose; and while they furnish the matter of our reflections, they will at the same time serve as a kind of guide to us in our progress. Be present, then, in imagination, on the mount of Calvary; mingle with the scene, and partake in all its interest, while, with the assistance of divine grace, I undertake the commissioned office (and it is all that I undertake) of directing your attention and prompting your reflections.

All that has preceded, and you are no strangers to its immense details, is insufficient to satiate the malice of his enemies. The decrees of Heaven, too, call for the completion of the sacrifice; the victim must not only be led up to the altar, but bound and slain upon it. This is done: his hands and feet are pierced and nailed to the cross. The horrors of such a deed, the cruel strokes, the agonizing convulsions, the gushings of the vital stream, I leave your feeling imaginations to supply. He is immediately raised above the heads of the crowd on his bed of torture, and made visible to all. It is at this moment, my brethren, that I call upon you to attend in spirit, and, sitting down under the shadow of this your beloved, observe at leisure what passes. The first effect of such a spectacle would, of course, be a general tumult; a mingled confusion of shouts, groans, and execrations. Turning our eyes, then, on him who is their common object, let us consider what must be his feelings at this moment, under all the pangs that imagination can conceive, and every pang redoubled and sharpened by mockery and triumph; for nothing gives so keen an edge to pain as insult. It is natural to think how human nature would act under so dreadful a situation; it seems scarcely possible to do otherwise than to resent. Justice, even, in some degree, would seem to demand resentment; and certainly example, even sacred example, would not be wanting to sanction it. Elias called down fire from heaven on his enemies; Eliseus cursed his youthful revilers, and Noah his own son; and what a vast difference in the occasion! Yes, my brethren, but these were but men; He, who here suffers, is more,

and his conduct is as extraordinary as his character. In silence he suffers the storm of passion to spend all its rage upon him; and, when it had a little subsided, and a calmer interval would allow his meek voice to be heard, he opens his lips, and gives vent to his feelings in words never to be forgotten, which have a thousand times softened the hardest hearts, and disarmed the fiercest revenge: *Father*, he exclaims, *forgive them; for they know not what they do.*

Often as you have heard this, the first exclamation which your Redeemer uttered from the cross, perhaps, my brethren, you have never fully weighed its import, nor compared it with those who were its subject. They were the most wicked of men; they were in the actual perpetration of a crime which had not, and could not have a parallel. They were his most deadly enemies; they had persecuted him through life; they had ever thirsted for his blood, and now, when they had accomplished the deed, instead of relenting, they add mockery to cruelty. He reads their hearts, and sees their desires go even beyond their actions: and yet from the cruel rack on which they have elevated him, he cries out, in their hearing, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* It is clear, then, that he forgives them; he even becomes himself their advocate with eternal justice. To insure their forgiveness, he appeals to the tender name of Father; he suppresses their crime; he spares them every harsh epithet; he even invents an excuse, where an excuse would have seemed impossible.

My brethren, that our divine Redeemer should have reserved this for one of his dying lessons, and have preached it thus powerfully to us from the cross, must make it more than probable that there existed a strong necessity for it in our nature. And so we find, to forgive is difficult, and as rare as it is difficult. I say nothing here of that cool system of revenge, so well known in the world. But, independently of this, how rare is it, even for Christians, truly to forgive! An injury is offered, a mere word, for example, uttered perhaps without design or reflection; the immediate effect is resentment in the offended party, and too often purposed revenge; whereas what is his clear and undeniable duty? Undoubtedly to forgive; even if he were deeply and maliciously injured, instantly to forgive on recollection; to

love, to cherish his offending brother as before, and to repay, if possible, his misconduct with benefits. I will not make use of arguments on such an occasion; let the powerful example of this day serve instead. No case between man and man will ever approach to a parallel with the enormous wrongs here sustained; the most injured of men is still a debtor to divine, if not to human justice. Let him, then, who feels any resentment in his breast against a fellow-christian and a brother, look up at the cross, and consider who there suffers, what he suffers, and from whom, and then listen to his pathetic exclamation: *Father, forgive them:* and if he does not instantly let go his resentments, and feel his breast warmed with the generous feeling of forgiveness, which is, in fact, its own immediate reward, and the true and only lenitive under the smart of injuries, that man's heart must be harder than the rocks, and he himself undeserving of that mercy, which, even under the image of his dying God, he is incapable of feeling towards an offending brother.

So powerful an appeal to the human heart it would seem impossible to withstand. To those, however, who now surround the sufferer, it is made in vain,—at least for the present; for in a few days these touching words will be found to react and draw even from these hardened hearts the waters of compunction. They are not altogether lost even now. Two thieves had been crucified with him, one on either hand, whose fate and sufferings have hitherto drawn no attention, overpowered by the superior interest of the illustrious victim before us. One of these, attentive to what passes, observing such consummate malice on one hand, and such astonishing meekness on the other, on hearing his last unexampled and heart-melting exclamation, suddenly opens his eyes to the latent mystery. A rapid light beams upon his understanding, and a strong grace touches his heart; he becomes a convert on the spot, and, in open defiance of all around him, cries aloud: *Lord, remember me, when thou shalt come into thy kingdom.* These words, my brethren, uttered in such a situation, are very remarkable. Who ever heard of one man under public execution addressing his dying companion as a king, and asking for admittance into his kingdom? To the ordinary spectator, it must sound as little less than madness or mockery; to us, my brethren, it is another of these irradiations

of Divinity which, for our faith and support, he occasionally suffers to break forth from behind the dark cloud of his humiliations.

But if he is God, with what a reply is it likely he will receive such an address? If he is God, he is the God of justice; and he who addresses him is a criminal of the deepest dye, a robber, perhaps a murderer; whose whole life has been a tissue of iniquities, and who, down to this very moment, has been hardened in his guilt. What mercy can he expect? Ah, my brethren, but this is the hour of mercy, and of mercy without bounds. The blood of a redeeming God now flows, and he is the first on whom it falls. And how effectual, how complete is the ablution! In one moment he becomes, not only a penitent, but a saint: all is forgiven him; no satisfaction even is required, and he passes this very day from the instrument of his punishment into paradise. *Amen, I say to thee*, cries our divine Redeemer instantly, eagerly, without condition; *this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* Oh! what a consoling word for sinners, and how many has it gained to salvation! for be assured, my brethren, whoever shall open his heart to divine grace, like this dying penitent, and conceive that faith, hope, and love which his words express will be received with equal eagerness, and find as complete an indulgence.

But, my brethren, I must point out to you another part of the mystery, another character of divinity, which, perhaps, does not so readily strike you. On the one hand of your dying God you see the converted sinner; but look on the other, and you will likewise find the reprobate sinner. You will see there the other malefactor, unaffected by all he sees, unmoved by his companion's example, impervious to grace, and under the very shadow of his Redeemer, and sprinkled, I may say, with his divine blood, dying hard, a blasphemer and a reprobate. How exactly, how literally does our Lord here verify his own words: *There shall be two men in one field; one shall be taken and the other left.* See how occultly indeed, but to the eye of faith strikingly and awfully, he exemplifies his twofold character of Judge and Redeemer of men, with the elect on his right hand, and the reprobate on the left. Let the negligent and presumptuous Christian observe this and tremble. However, having

just remarked this, I draw a veil over it; content merely to have alluded to so severe a topic in a scene peculiarly sacred to mercy and love.

A new appearance now arises to engage our attention. The malice, or at least the perseverance, of his enemies relaxing, gradually thins the crowd that surrounds him, and allows room and impunity for some of his friends to witness his dying moments. Among the rest, we observe the beloved disciple, St. John. His presence, at such a moment, besides other motives, was evidently a secret dispensation of his divine Master, who thus provided for himself an eye-witness of his last moments, who might minutely and faithfully record for us every interesting circumstance. What would be the feelings of the affectionate disciple at such an hour, we may easily conjecture; but we cannot stay to consider them; for our attention is immediately absorbed by a still more extraordinary personage,—no other than the sufferer's most venerable mother. Her presence, on such an occasion, is certainly an incident unique in the history of public executions. What mother was ever seen attending the violent death of her own child? Nature shrinks with all her force from such a sight, and even a certain decorum seems to prohibit it. But all such considerations are here overruled; views and designs of a higher order here reign, and a secret impulse from above concurs with her own powerful sympathy to urge her to the spot. And let us calmly consider what must be the feelings of two persons so dear to each other, at so sad and painful a meeting? If common mothers possess feelings which only themselves can estimate, let them judge what must be her feelings in whom nature and grace are both pre-eminent. What must be that sword which pierces her tender heart, when, lifting her eyes to the cross, she takes in, at the first glance, the whole extent of his sufferings! It is saying but little of such a mother, that she would willingly change situations with her son; it is saying but little of such a son, that he feels all the sorrows of his mother as his own, and endures in her a new crucifixion. And surely, at such a moment, he will not refuse to console her; surely he, who prayed aloud for the forgiveness of his enemies, and eagerly promised paradise to the penitent thief, will not refuse to open his lips to give one word

of comfort to his cherished mother, in this her extremity of anguish. He does, indeed, open his lips, but for a very different purpose from what we might anticipate. It is not to impart consolation; at this sad hour, heaven forbids it. The mother must be worthy of the son. She must be pre-eminent, as in dignity, so in suffering. Such, my brethren, is the will of heaven; they who approach nearest the throne of God, must stand nearest the cross. The few words which he now speaks may not improperly be called the last legacy of our dying Lord. Of earthly goods, he, who had not even where to lay his head, is not likely to have much to leave; he has just been stripped of all he had left in the world, his garments; and has seen them, under his eyes, become the contested perquisite of his needy and low-born executioners. But he loves his blessed Mother, and attentive, even in death, to her honor as well as our instruction, he hastens to make, in her regard, his last dispositions. Glancing his eyes upon her, and from her on the beloved disciple, he says: *Woman, behold thy son.* Dutiful and considerate as these words are, how many secret pangs do they convey to her soul, had we leisure to dwell upon them! Then, casting a significant look on the disciple: *Behold thy mother;* thus bequeathing him the greatest treasure a mortal man could receive. Christians, think not that you are unconcerned in this double legacy of your dying Redeemer; you have in it a deep interest. You, in the person of St. John, become the adopted children of the Mother of God, dearer to her by far than you can be to any earthly parents. How can she but feel and be interested for you, whom she brought forth with so much pain under the cross? Happy those who know how to appreciate the feelings and the tenderness of such a mother! unhappy those who are insensible to it, and know not or slight the immense advantages which they possess in her spiritual maternity! The day will come when they will feel its full value, but feel it only in its loss; when they shall stand before her son in another capacity than that of Redeemer, and it shall be too late even for her to avail them!

Having satisfied this last duty, our Redeemer, after an interval, again opens his mouth, to utter words, perhaps the most extraordinary that ever fell from his lips. If, as St. Paul intimates, he shed tears in his passion, it must surely have been at

this moment, when, lifting up his eyes to heaven, he cries out, in the anguish of his heart: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* thus appearing to countenance all the mockery of his enemies, and voluntarily to thicken the gloom which gathers round him. By this he gives us to understand, that all that we see him suffer in his person, is nothing to what he endures in his soul; that his humanity is given up to unqualified desolation; that the floods of anguish have now burst their bounds, and carried him *into the depth of the sea, where the tempest hath overwhelmed him.* No human expression could possibly reach the force of these incredible words; they seem to stand on the last verge of probability. But let not our faith be disturbed by them: we know they are but the voice of his suffering humanity. The devout soul even finds in them the natural expression of filial love, the fond complaints of a chastised, yet dutiful and affectionate child; and the enlightened Christian, on a little investigation, discovers in these words a new and unexpected proof of the divinity of him who utters them. For it is remarkable, that these very words are the commencement of the twenty-first Psalm, which contains a minute prophetic description of the scene which we are contemplating. He is now uttering the very words prepared for him by his prophet; and his enemies, while gratifying their own malice, are unknowingly verifying every little particular that has been foretold of him. For it is there said: *They have dug my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones.* How literally is this verified before our eyes. *They have looked and stared upon me: they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots.* Could any thing be more wonderfully precise? His persecutors are there described under the figures of fierce animals, bulls, lions, and unicorns; and it is said of them: *They have spoken with their lips, and wagged their heads: He hoped in the Lord,—let him deliver him; let him save him, if he will have him;* the identical words we have just heard them utter.

There is, indeed, one predicted circumstance yet unaccomplished; for, it is also said of him: *In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* They have already presented him vinegar with gall: but neither was this in consequence of his thirst, nor

did he actually drink it. To complete, then, this last little circumstance, he again opens his lips, and exclaims: *I thirst.* Thus, while apparently only expressing the feelings of suffering nature, he appears, as St. Augustine remarks, like a traveller, deliberately setting out on a journey, and carefully preparing every minute requisite for his departure. We must not, however, overlook the direct meaning of this new exclamation of our agonizing Saviour: *I thirst.* By it he expresses to us, what we might otherwise have lost sight of, the intense burning thirst, which he endures, well known to be one of the greatest torments of the human frame; by it he expiates our excesses and intemperances; and, at the same time, animates us under the same tormenting feeling, when it shall be our lot to endure it, in the distempers of life or the agonies of death. By this word he also intimates to us a thirst of a higher order and more penetrating anguish, the thirst of the soul, his keen and eager thirst for the salvation of all mankind, which, however, to the immense increase of his pains, he too plainly foresees, is never to be more than partially satisfied. *There was,* says St. John, *a vessel placed near full of vinegar.* Of this, his attendants, pursuing their malice, and little thinking they were but executing his own eternal designs, presented him to drink. And when he had drunk, he uttered his next exclamation.

It is consummated. This, like all the rest, is replete with various meaning. It is consummated. All is accomplished; the great work is complete; all the signs, types, and prophecies are fulfilled: not an iota or tittle of the law is wanting: the world is redeemed: man is reconciled to God: hell is vanquished and heaven opened. Perhaps the Son of God never uttered any words with more heartfelt satisfaction. If the weary traveller sighs with satisfaction as he bursts on the closing prospect of his long journey; if the exhausted racer, as he springs to the goal, collects his last breath for a burst of exultation; if the taxed slave slips from his weary shoulders the last burden with a groan of alacrity, and the toiling and long-expecting artificer, as he crowns his painful task with the finishing stroke, utters an involuntary cheer: with what intense feeling must the Redeemer of mankind have uttered these expressive words, at the close of his immense sufferings and gigantic labors. Doubtless a beam of

celestial joy must have played over his divine countenance. With similar and proportionate feeling, my brethren, shall we utter or conceive the same sentiment, as we close our mortal career, if that career has been, as it must be to every true Christian, one of labors, of trials, and of crosses: but with very different feeling shall we utter it, if our life has been one of pleasures, of luxuries, of amusements, of worldly hopes and fears, with all their trivial objects. "It is consummated," shall you then have to exclaim; all is over. Riches, pleasures, feastings, friends,—all are gone, and gone for ever. Nothing remains: time is past, and eternity succeeds,—eternity, a dark, unknown, and fearful vacuity.

After uttering these words, nothing evidently remains for him but to give to the long-protracted scene its last sad circumstance. But pause, my brethren,—is it possible such an event should occur? Shall it ever be true, to say that God dies? There are here two natures, but there is only one person; and if we see him, who here hangs in torment, at last expire, it will become true, literally and strictly true, in all the languages of the earth, that God dies! We never should have conceived it; *the thoughts of man are timid;* never would he have conceived the bold idea, nor his language have ventured on the daring expression that God should die. It is, however, here about to be realized and stamped with eternal accuracy. Yes, it was necessary; the sacrifice must be consummated. It was necessary for the fulfilment of the decrees of heaven, and it was also necessary for us. For, my brethren, we also must die; this penal sentence is the sternest and most irreversible of all the decrees of the Almighty: he himself even, in our guilty flesh, does not form an exception. It constitutes the greatest and most terrible of sublunary evils; all the rest the Son of God has borne, and now, with an excess of goodness, he submits also to this; and, having taught us how to live, teaches us the more difficult lesson how to die. Indeed, my brethren, how should we be able, with any degree of alacrity, to enter the dark, narrow passage, if such a leader had not gone before us? How terrible would it have been to descend the obscure and unknown abyss, if we had not been encouraged by his example; when, even with that example before us, the most courageous are found to tremble on its dizzy verge? To en-

courage us then to die,—to teach us how to die,—to consecrate our death, and to convert it from a penalty into a meritorious sacrifice, he collects his remaining breath for one last vigorous effort; and, not like ordinary mortals, whose last breath is an imperceptible sigh, but with a voice which at once strikes his by-standers with amazement and conviction, he cries aloud, as he lifts up his eyes to heaven: *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*, and with the words expires. At the same moment, the earth trembles; the rocks cleave asunder; the graves open; the veil of the temple is rent from top to bottom; the centurion cries aloud: *This man was the Son of God;* the hard hearts even of his enemies are touched; and, as the crowd breaks up, many of them are seen striking their breasts, and returning home in silent sorrow and confusion.

Breaking up now, in like manner, my brethren, from the spectacle you have been in spirit attending, what impressions will you bear away? what lessons will you carry home with you from this great school of all wisdom? Instead of singling out any one, for an assembly so varied and promiscuous, I will ask of you and recommend to you something that will comprise them all, very obvious certainly, and assuredly very reasonable; that is, not to forget the cross of your Redeemer, to look up at it, to contemplate it, to spend at least some occasional moments at its foot, reading its powerful lessons, and imbibing the sacred influence which breathes from it. How many sinners have here dated their conversion! how many saints have hence derived their sanctity! Is this requiring too much? Shall Christians overlook and forget that sacred object to which they are so deeply indebted? Shall five, ten, or fifteen minutes appear too great a proportion to the three long hours which he spent in all the agonies of that cruel situation, in rescuing them from eternal death, and reconciling them to God at so immense a cost?

If gratitude is not able to attain so much, shall I employ the influence of an inferior motive? Nay, rather forget your Redeemer; be ashamed of his cross; never think upon it; look not at it; see in it nothing more than the ancient pagans, to whom it was yet an object of ignominy. This will not be for ever. There are two occasions yet to come, when your forgetfulness will cease; when the cross will force itself on your

attention, and, whether you will or no, become your only remaining object. When the present scene of things shall terminate, when the world shall have undergone its last change, and be left incrusted in its own sepulchral ashes; when man shall then rise again upon the scene; of all, that once checkered it, how much will he discover? Palaces, gardens, monuments, cities will be in vain looked for; of all the once familar objects of the earth, one only will be found surviving. What?—the cross! the sign of the Son of man in the heavens! And to those, who shall have forgotten it, and—the natural consequence of such forgetfulness—shall have become ashamed of it, shall have shrunk from it, shall have frustrated all its effects in themselves, and perhaps in others, how terrible an object will it then be!

But this occasion is remote. There is another, then, which is near, near to all, to some perhaps imminent and immediate. Yes, you anticipate me aright; at the hour of your death the cross of your Redeemer will again meet you. All other objects will have left you; whether they be riches, worldly friends, pleasures, or possessions, they will then slip away from you; or, if they could attend your dying couch, what would it be, but to mock you with their impotence and deceit? The minister of God will then put the divine effigy into your hands, and declare to you, that it is your only hope. And you yourself will feel it. You will be distressed by sickness, and struggling with the pangs of dissolution; under which nothing will be able to support and console you, but the image of Him who endured so much for you and consecrated your sufferings by his own. You will be harassed with doubts and fears, and disturbed by the remembrance of your sins; and whence can you derive confidence, but in the sight of your crucified God, of Him, who, if he is about to be your judge, has been first your Redeemer? You will tremble at the dark and unexplored region into which you are about to enter: and nothing, at such a moment, will be able to inspire you with courage, but the sight and remembrance of Him, who is the Sovereign and disposer of that kingdom, who holds the keys of life and death, and who has there purchased for you, by his own blood, if you have not abandoned that purchase, a secure inheritance. At that last, sad, and

most decisive moment, how forlorn will be your situation, if you be a stranger to the cross; if your last resource then fail you; if the only object, which shall then have power to animate, to encourage and to console, shall be found powerless in your hands, and unfamiliar, without expression, without interest, and without hope. Adhere, then, Christians, and adhere closely to the cross of your Redeemer; sit down frequently, as you have done this day, in spirit under its shadow; study its sublime lessons, imbibe its heavenly spirit, and adopt, in spite of the world, its holy maxims. Be assured, it will be your best guide in life, and your safeguard in death; your securest passport to eternal joys, and your surest pledge of a glorious resurrection.

Sermon XXXV.

Good Friday.

ON THE PASSION.

What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it.—Isaiah v. 4.

Of all the truths proposed to our belief by our all-wise Creator and God, I know of none so overwhelming to our limited reason as the eternal torments of the world to come. Pagan morality durst not venture on the tremendous conception; it pointed to a future state of punishments, but never ventured to give them eternity. It was reserved for Christianity to proclaim the awful truth, and support her celestial injunctions by its more potent energy. She has long ago proclaimed it. The written word of God distinctly attests it, and the voice of his infallible Church loudly asserts it as one of the most prominent of her articles. Yet, there is no revealed truth which the sinners of the earth are more unwilling to believe. They cannot persuade themselves, after all, that their God will, at their departure out of life, exact from them an eternal vengeance. And, in fact, my brethren, certain as it is, it must be acknowledged to be a mystery that calls aloud for some unusual support. For, on the one hand, man is a weak and frail being, liable to fall every instant. His understanding is clouded by ignorance, his will stubborn and untractable. A thousand enemies, inveterate and indefatigable, surround him from without, and watch every unguarded moment to surprise him; within he has still more dangerous enemies, leagued with his eternal foes, and whose whole study is to betray him into their hands. In this condition, what wonder if he should fall? On the other hand, his

Creator is a God of infinite goodness; he has an infinite love for his creatures, far superior even to that essential love which they have for themselves. And yet, at their passage out of life, thousands and millions of them fall into that bottomless pit out of which there is no redemption. And he sees this, he wills it, he ordains it. Their sufferings there are vast, immense, every thing but infinite, and yet will never satisfy his vengeance. No! when they have accumulated for whole eternities, they will still find him unpitying and inexorable.

Christians, how shall we comprehend this conduct of our infinitely good God? That such will be his conduct, we know from his own revelation; we know that it must be just, because He is justice itself: but how shall we reconcile it with that reason which he himself has given us? Is there any elucidation of the unintelligible mystery? Yes, my brethren, this day is its grand elucidation; this day clears up all. On this day, our God consents to be tried at the tribunal of our reason, and defies us to charge him with injustice or severity. And for my part, after having contemplated the scene which this day exhibits, I confess that I am satisfied, fully satisfied: I have not a possible doubt remaining. Hell opens its abyss, and displays before me its avenging torments, and I acknowledge they are just; its wretched inhabitants send up their despairing cries and lamentations: I pity them, but I cannot excuse them. And such, my brethren, no doubt, will be your sentiments when you have accompanied me to the astonishing scene which we are now assembled to commemorate.

I need not conduct you through the preparatory stages which have led to it. That office has been already performed for me by the beloved disciple, an eye-witness of all he has described. It will be enough, therefore, for me to concentrate your attention upon the concluding scene.

The first question that naturally presents itself is: Who is the extraordinary personage so conspicuous in this day's tragedy?

And here, my brethren, indulge me in a wish for a moment, that at first, perhaps, may appear extravagant, but in the end will, I hope, redeem itself. I wish, my brethren, you had not known it; I wish, were it possible, you had been kept strangers to the scene that was passing. I would then myself have been your

guide; I would have conducted you up the steep of Calvary, marked at every step with the traces of blood; and, making my way through the tumultuous crowd, would have stationed you at the foot of the cross. There I would have desired you to look upon the extraordinary sufferer, and contemplate his unexampled torments; and whilst you were compassionating him, and concluding it was some common mortal expiating his crimes, Behold, I would have exclaimed, behold your God! Ah! my brethren, what would then have been your sentiments, what would have been your astonishment, and perhaps even your incredulity, till I called your attention to the sun darkened over your head, to the ground trembling under your feet, and universal nature attesting the death of her Lord. Yes, my brethren, great, in these circumstances, would have been your amazement; but now, because you were acquainted with the sublime truth, because you have been familiar with it from your childhood, you hear it without emotion; so that when, pointing to the image on Mount Calvary, where we are now in spirit standing, I assert, that it is your God, I say nothing that affects you; you have heard it till you no longer feel its meaning; and this day, the *obiit* of God, this day, which eternity itself will never forget, passes to most of us as a day of only common occurrence. Whence, brethren, this insensibility? Does it arise from want of faith? No! I cannot think it. It is true, that he who hangs before us presents the appearance of an ordinary mortal. He is like one of ourselves in form and feature. But this only enhances the wonder, and increases our obligations to him. In his own divine nature, he could not suffer; he has, therefore, assumed our wretched humanity in order that it might be possible. Man, therefore, as he appears, he is truly God; and each one of you who hear me believes it as his own existence. It is not faith, therefore, my brethren, that we want, but reflection: we believe, but we believe without thinking.

Let us, then, in order to rouse, if possible, our slumbering sensibilities, pause for once, and reflect what it is we say, when we say that a God now hangs before us. Look around, my brethren, upon the heavens and the earth; how sublime an idea do they convey of their Almighty Architect! What a stupendous mass is the ponderous globe, upon which we stand; yet he poises

it with one finger! How vast the abyss of its waters; yet he measures it, as the Scripture says, in the palm of his hand! How awful is the roar of the thunder; it is but the feeble echo of his voice! How terrific the glare of the lightning; it is only a faint scintillation of his brightness! All that we see around us, the vast luminaries that roll above us, the earth which we inhabit, with its endless diversity of animals and productions, with ourselves too, the lords and masters of the whole, once were not; we had no existence; we absolutely were not. He, the Almighty, spoke but one word, and instantly we leaped into being, and we are! How does the soul and all her faculties sink into insignificance before this idea of her Creator God. Yet, turn now, my brethren, upon the cross, and recognise the same God hanging before you! Do you start at the expression? But, daring as it may appear, it is literally true. You know it; you knew it before, only you did not reflect upon it. How, indeed, it is to be comprehended, I do not pretend to tell you. The highest angels are here equally at a loss with ourselves; it is like all his other wonders, vast and incomprehensible; and all we have to do, is to bow down before it in mute adoration.

Let us not stop here, my brethren, but while the impression of this amazing truth is upon our minds, proceed and consider what it is, that this incarnate God here suffers. We, my brethren, can endure nothing; pain is our abhorrence; it is opposite to our very nature, and so irresistible in its effects, that, when it seizes upon us in its more violent forms, it completely overwhelms us. We become wrapped up in ourselves, and insensible to every thing, but our own misery. With what feelings, then, my brethren, were we not familiarised to the spectacle, with what feelings should we, this day, look up at the cross, where our Saviour-God hangs in the most excruciating torture, pierced hand and foot with gross nails, fastened to the ignominious tree, elevated above the heads of a shouting crowd, and supporting that cruel situation for three protracted hours!

My brethren, were we at this moment to behold this scene of torture exhibited in the person of the meanest slave, we could not look upon it unmoved. Were he even the worst of criminals, it would still be impossible: the humanity planted in our breasts would rise superior to all resistance, and overpower our abhor-

rence of his guilt; we should forget the criminal, and look only upon the man. How much more would the sight affect us, were it exemplified in the person of some one dear to us, some friend, some amiable individual, whom we could not at any time look on without emotion. What a tempest of passion would then agitate the soul, and almost force it from its earthly tenement! And can we stand by, and observe, without emotion, the person of our incarnate God treated in this outrageous manner? of him, who is the most beautiful of the sons of men, whose countenance is the desire of the angels?

Surely, my brethren, this were already torment enough; but look now upon his divine face, and observe it streaming with blood. A platted wreath of thorns, fixed and pressed down upon his sacred head, in mockery of a crown! Which is the greater, the pain or the ignominy? He has styled himself their King, and we have seen in what a sublime sense he is so; and this is the crown which they have given him! Is it possible for any human sensibility to be proof against such a scene of complicated cruelty and insult? Yet, turn your eyes now, my brethren, upon the crowd that surrounds him, and see the compassion which he meets with. They stand scoffing at him and deriding him, shaking their heads at him, as they pass, and crying: *Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and in three days buildest it up again, save thy own self.* They bid him come down from his bed of torture, and they will then believe that he is their God. They wilfully mistake his pathetic exclamation, and insultingly ask whether Elias will come to his assistance. And yet, my brethren, this is truly their God, concealed under human form; and how painful must have been to him these outrages of his own creatures, thus licensed to insult him! Must he not almost have forgotten, for a moment, the corporal agonies he was enduring? But, is there then none, my brethren, in the numerous crowd, not one that pities him, that consoles him, and that ventures to raise a friendly voice amid the discordant outcries that salute his ears? No, my brethren, we cannot expect it, when even his domestics and favorites, his own apostles, have fled away and abandoned him. One of them has betrayed him, has sold him; another, the prince of them, has denied that he ever knew him. What a wound in that heart, which friendship

must have touched with its finest sensibility! Certainly this suffering God must have been here employing his own omniscience in the selection of his sufferings.

But they are not even yet completed. If the earth has abandoned him, he can still look up to his native skies, the seat of his own eternal dominion. But no, the heavens themselves seem not now to recognise him; its ministering spirits seem to have forgotten that he is their God. But a little while ago, they descended to offer him consolation; now, as if confounded at the magnitude of his evils, they all stand aloof, and look on in silence at the astonishing spectacle. And in this condition, suspended between heaven and earth, forgotten seemingly by the one, and loaded with the maledictions of the other, this divine sufferer bows down his sacred head and expires!

And now, fellow-Christians, the cause of this wonderful appearance? Yes, without the formality of regular transition, let us proceed, hasten on, and consider for whom it is that an incarnate God here offers himself in expiation. For some partner in the heavens? for some co-equal in omnipotence? No, there is none, can be none; he alone is the great King of heaven and earth, the sole Omnipotent. Perhaps, then, some favorite of his court, some bright power of the heavens, has unhappily offended, and he, by an immense generosity, has descended to atone for him? Yes, Lucifer has fallen, Lucifer, the first of the celestials. And is it he, then, who has thus roused the commiseration of a God? No, he associates in his guilt the choicest beauties of the heavens; but they fall together into the avenging gulf, unpitied and unregarded.

Where, then, is the favored creature that is to justify this partiality of an independent God? There remains only man. Yes, my brethren, poor perishable man has caused this grand prodigy. Child of the dust, as he is, he has called down from his eternal throne the Omnipotent to redeem him. For he too had unhappily fallen. He had transgressed his Maker's law, and in an evil hour had undone the glorious work of his creation. Plunged in an instant into an abyss of miseries, he did not attempt to rise, and indeed had not left himself the power. He went on, adding sin to sin, insult to insult. He spread over the earth, and carried with him his rebellion and his impieties.

The iniquities of the father were multiplied in his children; one age improved on the vices of another; till at last almost the only intercourse between heaven and earth was the voice of crimes crying aloud for vengeance. And what was there to counteract the just demand? His God stood not in need of this his worthless creature; poor earth-born man had no connexion with his eternal self-sufficient happiness; and in one moment he might have crushed him, without regret. Hell, on the other hand, raised up its baleful voice, and demanded, with seeming equity, that he who had followed in guilt should follow also in punishment. The essential attribute of a God, impartial justice, seemed to second the terrible demand. And in this fearful moment, my brethren, what was it that saved us? The unaccountable, incomprehensible love of a God for the most wretched of his creatures. His impetuous love was too powerful for his justice, and, relenting into compassion, he pardoned us. Pardoned us, did I say? Oh! look again upon the Cross, and see the manner in which he has pardoned us! Who would have thought it? Had he but pardoned us, this would have been astonishing. Had he commissioned another to atone for us, this would still have been infinite mercy.

But that he should think of this,—that He, the omnipotent, the eternal, the essential of beings, should think of atoning for us himself, that he should leave his celestial throne, invest himself in our wretched clay, and atone for us himself, and atone for us in the manner we have just beheld,—oh, this surpasses all comprehension; this leaves us at once speechless and prostrate. Here we cannot understand; we can only be silent and adore. But, my brethren, there is yet another circumstance wanting, to complete this stupendous wonder. For was it necessary, if he must indulge his immense love, was it necessary he should descend to all this? that he should become as a worm and no man, and endure the very extremity of torment and ignominy? Could not a God remit his own claims at a cheaper rate than this? Faith teaches us, my brethren, and reason itself seems sufficient to evince that, coming from a God, the slightest atonement would have been enough; that, in a being of his infinite dignity, the very first drop of his inestimable blood would have sufficed, nay, would have blotted out the sins

of a thousand worlds ten times more wicked than our own. Yet for us alone he prodigally shed it all; he would observe no medium in his love, nor rest satisfied till he had selected and combined in his own person every refinement of suffering, and exhausted the ingenuity of the most cruel of mankind.

Behold, then, the grand wonder complete! Behold the stupendous and unaccountable love of God to his guilty creature man, this day displayed to an unthinking world! And may I not add, taking up the pledge which I have thrown down, behold the eternal vengeance of God upon men in another world abundantly justified! For is it not so, my brethren? Can any one among us now venture to raise a single doubt in their favor? No; ye unhappy inmates of those dreadful prisons, cease your clamorous outcries. When we reflect that He who is now your tormentor was once your Redeemer, that before he passed on you the fatal sentence, He himself, God as he is, had bled and died for you upon the cross, and offered you your rescue at this immense price, and you would not accept it, how can we excuse you? how can we, for a single moment, admit your complaints? No; in vain do you yourselves attempt to frame the rising blasphemy; in vain would you assert that you have not merited your torments; dreadful, overwhelming, eternal as they are, you this day shrink into your fiery dungeons, and feel that they are just.

And we, too, my brethren, must certainly now acknowledge that if ever it be our misfortune to fall into that place of wo, the fault will be entirely our own. We shall not certainly have our God to blame. For what more could he have done to extricate us from it? It was indeed our destined and inevitable abode; but he has with his own blood effaced the terrible handwriting; and if, after this, we are eternally miserable, it is our own free and deliberate choice. It is vain to allege that we have still a thousand enemies combining to drag us into the bottomless gulf; have we not now an omnipotent arm stretched out to save us? It would be cruel to complain that unruly passions still clamor in our bosoms: does any of them speak so loud as an expiring God? It would be injustice and insult to allege that we are surrounded by sin in every shape, and daily allured by its tempting baits: has it any persuasive like the

image of a crucified Saviour? No, my brethren, if we can calmly look up at the cross, and still embrace and persist in an evil which was dearly expiated, we are hopeless, we are beyond redemption, we are out of the reach of motives, and must prepare without a resource for that hell which he, for whom it was first created, had not merited by such obdurate malignity.

But, my brethren, I am unwilling to leave you with this conclusion. This, though the immediate inference of my discourse, may surely, on this extraordinary day, yield its place in the mind of a generous being, to one less direct, but more engaging. What this is, it cannot be necessary to specify, when I recall your attention to the image of a God expiring out of his love for us. My brethren, we are created for love, we must necessarily love. All that we want is some grand object fully adequate to the strong propensity that agitates us. And where, my brethren, where shall we find it, but in the amiable God who this day exhibits so moving a spectacle? Infinitely charming in himself, he this day seconds the powerful attraction by gratuitous love for us, thus combining in himself every motive that can act upon our hearts. How then can we any longer resist? Turn, Christians, turn upon your God the force of that ever active principle within you, which will never suffer you to rest, which was implanted in you by him, and which you are your own greatest enemies if you do not direct to him.

Thus only will you escape that dreadful vengeance which, as we have seen, will be the just punishment of his slighted love. Or, if you are not as yet prepared to take the happy resolution, acknowledge at least the wisdom and the justice of it, and cease henceforward to wonder what powerful motive it is that engages and supports the votaries of retirement in a way of life so different from your own.

Yes, my brethren, you, my friends and associates in the ministry of a crucified God, to you, in the last place, I now address myself; you have a particular interest in this day's mystery. To the world at large, perhaps, when I speak of the love of God, I hold a language too sublime, one which it but little understands. Surrounded with vanities, buried in spiritual sloth, and accustomed only to the language and sentiments of a profane passion, it knows not of any other, and when we attempt

to raise its grovelling affections to the sublime love of an all-perfect God, and even support the exertion with all the force of this day's wonder, it is still insensible; it hears us with indifference, if not with impatience; and coolly gives back the neglected lesson to the contemplative inmates of the cloister and the sanctury. Let us, then, my brethren, gladly take it for ourselves. We have no ties upon the world, nor the world upon us; we have seen through and despised the emptiness of its boasted advantages, and have nothing left but to pursue with ardor that better part which we have chosen. To us, then, the impressive lesson of this day will be read with more effect.

Indeed, we have an additional motive to learn it well; for we are called, as I have just expressed it, to be the ministers and delegates of this crucified God upon earth; we are the depositories of that sacred fire which this day burned with such vehemence on Mount Calvary, and are to scatter and enkindle it through a frozen world. With what eagerness, then, ought we to cherish the sacred affection, and light it up betimes in our own bosoms. And how shall we so effectually do it, as in the contemplation of this day's mystery? Yes, my brethren, it was here that the apostles first grew inflamed; it was the recollection of this scene that carried them through all their labors, and made sufferings and death their glory and their gain. St. Paul, our great model, declared, that he knew nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified; though he had been rapt to the third heaven, and made acquainted with celestial secrets. And truly, my brethren, this is the grand compendium of all our studies. They all centre here, or are reducible to this, the knowledge and love of a crucified God. This sacred lesson, once learned well, would supply every deficiency; it would fill us at once with true wisdom, and inspire us with genuine eloquence. Whereas, without it, though possessed of all the sciences, we should be deplorably ignorant; though adepts in human eloquence, we should be no better than sounding brass or tinkling cymbals.

If, then, my brethren, in the multiplicity and distraction of our other pursuits, we have too often lost sight of this grand study, let this day at least terminate the omission, and be our day of introduction to a new school. Let us henceforward make

this mystery one of the most prominent subjects of our daily contemplation. Let us frequently place ourselves at the foot of the cross; let us look up with feeling affection at that sublime and expressive image. The saints assure us that God regards with complacency even the sinner who looks devoutly upon the cross. The hardest rocks are excavated by time, the coldest bodies become warm by repeated application to the fire. Though now perhaps unfeeling, we shall in time yield to the powerful impression; on some destined day, the moving image of an amiable God, expiring out of love for us, with expanded arms inviting us into his embraces, will touch us with sensibility. A ray will beam from the cross upon our understandings; a spark will fall from it upon our frozen hearts. Surprised and delighted with the new sensation, we shall cherish it with ardor. Meditation will fan the flame; increasing graces will enlarge and expand it, and raise it at last into a conflagration, which even the corrupt and unfriendly air of a surrounding world will afterwards have no power to damp or extinguish.

Sermon XXV.

Easter Sunday.

RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.

This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein.
PSALM CXVII. 24.

YES, my brethren, if ever joy was legitimate and just, it is surely ours, on this day! The great victory is achieved! The valiant Lion of the tribe of Juda has roused himself from his short slumber; our incomparable Sampson has shaken off his fragile bands, and, rising in his might, has borne away, in easy triumph, the spoils of his enemies! How glorious! how transcendent in his success! Never is conquest more complete and triumphant, than when it surprises the exulting foe in the moment of fancied victory. Hell was apparently successful: its blind instruments, the Jews, had exercised their pleasure on the reputed Son of God with the fullest impunity. They traduce him as an impostor, and he says nothing to the charge. They offer to believe him, if he comes down from the cross: and he declines the challenge. By his loud complaint to his celestial Father, he even appears to countenance all their triumph; and then completes their conviction, by closing his eyes before them, in the common death of mortals. They follow his lifeless body to the tomb, see it laid stiff and cold in the monument, secure the entrance by a massy stone, and fix upon it the seal of public authority. Could any security be more perfect, any success more apparently complete? Accordingly, they retire exultingly and satiated, and now speak of him publicly as a notorious seducer.

Then it was that our divine Redeemer, returned in secret from his short visit to the lower regions, rejoined his sacred body,

and animated it with new life. He, that was truly dead, rises as from a trance, puts off his sepulchral bands, pierces the solid rock, yet without injury to its integrity, and ascends into day, visible and triumphant. A sudden earthquake announces the rising God; the affrighted guards flee into the city; and the ministers of heaven descend in dazzling array, and, removing with angelic ease the ponderous obstruction, lay open the empty tomb to the inspection of his anxious adherents. *He is risen; he is not here.*

Such, my brethren, is the wondrous spectacle of this day; such the glorious triumph of our late suffering Redeemer. And who would not think that this great day at least were exclusively his own? that, if he died for *us*, he should rise again for *himself?* Can *we* have any share in a scene so miraculous? Yes, my brethren, *we* are one day to realize it; we are to rise again, with him, and on his model; and it is this that gives double joy to this most glorious of Christian festivals. Nor does this all-bountiful God, while we celebrate his triumph, forbid us,—he even wills us, to contemplate in it our own: and I, therefore, propose to entertain you on so congenial a subject. We began the penitential time with the sad lesson of mortality; it is but just we should close it with that of immortality. A few weeks back, religion covered us with ashes and humbled us into our native dust: let us see how magnificently she repays the momentary humiliation, and how nobly she vindicates her celestial character from the senseless charge of austerity and gloom. A few unstudied observations on the resurrection of our bodies, the properties with which they will be endowed, and the delights to which they will be invited, shall form the entertainment of this auspicious day.

As no historic fact was ever more invincibly established than that our Divine Saviour actually rose again, in his own flesh, from the dead; so no dogma of our faith is more clear and indisputable than that we shall also rise again like him, at our appointed time. I will not, especially on such a day, spend time in accumulating proofs and authorities to support a truth too glorious to admit of cavil; I will only say that the best and greatest men in all ages have rested themselves upon it. The ancient Job, long before its first realization on this day, foresaw

it in spirit, and made it his last hope and comfort, while abject and deserted on his lowly dunghill: *I know that my Redeemer liveth: that at the last day I shall rise again from the earth, and in my flesh shall see my God.* With the same, in later ages, the martyrs supported themselves in their torments, and in the hope of it, cheerfully gave up their limbs to be racked and lacerated. With the same hope, the penitents of the deserts encouraged themselves under their severe privations; and in every age, the dying faithful have been enabled to smile over their corporal dissolution, and to descend, even with complacency, into the dust. But is it possible, then, my brethren, that this same flesh, which we now see so frail and corruptible, and so effectually confounded, as it becomes in the sequel, with the trodden earth, should actually again rise out of it, should reappear in new life, and even renew the wonders of this day's spectacle? Yes, my brethren, it shall indeed descend into the dust, and, mingling with the common mass, lie there unheeded and forgotten, perhaps for ages; the ceaseless wheel of time shall pass and repass over it; the winds and the storms of heaven shall career above it; and the busy foot of unthinking man echo again and again within its silent mansion; but the sequel is as infallible as God;—the day, the unerring day shall at length arrive, when it shall suddenly start from its long trance, and its vital functions shall play again with all the vigour of youth. By what immediate agency this wonderful change will be effected, we will not stay to inquire, nor throw away our attention on the idle queries of a skeptic philosophy, which, for the present, may find sufficient employment in explaining the yearly resuscitation of the simplest floweret of the field. It will be more interesting to us, to dwell a little on the circumstances of this great event, satisfied, for our parts, that He, who made the original mass out of nothing, can easily reassemble its scattered ingredients, and reorganize what was only for a time dissolved.

At the end of time, when the world shall have completed its destined period, when the last of mortals shall have paid the debt of nature, and this vast earth become one universal sepulchre, shall have entombed the whole race of mankind, then shall the commissioned angel descend, and, placing one foot on

the land, and the other on the sea, shall sound from the celestial trumpet the resuscitating command: *Arise, ye dead.* This shall be enough: the potent words, resounding over the vast convex of earth and sea, shall be heard in their lowest abysses, and all the sons of men, from the first to the last, immediately stand on their feet. The very spot, where each one sank, shall see him rise; the identical matter which composed his frame shall be restored to the last atom. Nor shall this second creation cost more time or effort than the first; though its fiat, as that of an easier work, is here delegated to a ministerial voice, it shall be instantaneous, *in the twinkling of an eye,* says the apostle.

This great day, my brethren, may be as yet remote, as it is unquestionably unknown, and the closest of all secrets; but it is not, on that account, less fixed or inevitable. It is not more true that the present day *is*, than that that *shall be:* our eyes do not more certainly see the light of this day, than they shall hereafter be dazzled with the grand effulgence of that. All things are passing away; the great affairs of nations, and the private concerns of individuals, are equally disappearing, and gradually making room for that grand catastrophe, which is to close the series of time, and form the finishing page of human history. Then shall all men finally meet again: in resurrection we shall all be contemporaries. We that are here present, may have different fortunes; but in this we shall be uniform. Our destiny may divide us, and scatter us over the world; but here at last we shall infallibly meet, and, after the lapse of intervening ages, recognise again the forms by which we are now distinguished; perhaps call to mind the occasion which now assembles us together, and refer back to the anticipation which has been here suggested.

Looking, then, on the great event as certain, though yet future, and, however distant, still rapidly approaching, let us next consider the new and wonderful properties of the body, thus raised again from the dust. I here, of course, confine myself to the resurrection of the good; any other allusion, on such a day, would be altogether harsh and unseasonable.

The first remarkable property which strikes us, in the newly-endowed body of our risen Redeemer, is that which divines have denominated *subtlety*, or the power of pervading the hardest

substances. The tomb, as we have seen, was secured by every precaution; it was excavated from the solid rock, and its only aperture made sure, as his enemies thought, by an unwieldly stone. Yet, in the act of his resurrection, our Redeemer cleaves the gross obstruction with facility, just as light passes through the solid crystal, and, without even leaving an impression on its surface, rises triumphant over its ineffectual barrier. When the massy substance was afterwards removed, and the empty tomb laid open to view, it is expressly stated to have been by the hand of the descending angel. In like manner, a few days after, when the disciples were assembled together in the interior of a house, *the doors being closed*, as the Evangelist specifies, our new-risen Saviour suddenly stands among them, visible and tangible; eats with them, displays himself to them, and offers his hands and side to their inspection and handling. How wonderful, my brethren, how glorious is this new property imparted to our material nature, and how joyful to think that this gross, earthly substance, now so low and limited in its properties, and so essentially remote in its nature from that fine spirit which animates it, shall, when transformed, seem almost to rival its invisible partner, and, subtle like spirit, pervade without resistance the densest adamant. Strange and incredible as this may appear, we have a certain pledge of it in this day's mystery. During his natural life, the body of our Redeemer was like our own, gross, dense, and purely corporeal in its qualities: no sooner has he touched it with the immortal virtue, than it becomes altogether new and surprising; puts on qualities that seem denied to matter; and becomes all but spiritual in its nature. Hence, St. Paul does not hesitate to term it *a spiritual body*. In this, my brethren, let us rest; knowing well, that He, who gave to matter the properties, which it already has, many of them sufficiently inexplicable, can easily impart to it others of a higher order. And that he will do so, no less for us than for himself, we have, besides this day's spectacle, his own express assurance. *He will reform our lowly body*, says St. Paul, *and fashion it according to the body of his brightness. When he shall appear*, says St. John, *we shall be like to him.*

The next endowment of a glorified body is termed *agility*, or the power of rapid transition from place to place. Yes, this dull,

inert, lumpish mass of matter, which now confines our ethereal spirit, which clings so closely to its parent earth, and is so clogged and tardy in all its motions, is one day to be endowed, with a velocity greater than that of light, and which only the flight of thought can image to us. It will distance the most rapid luminaries, it will traverse creation at a bound; and no sooner shall the ruling will have conceived the remote term of its desires, than the agile frame will instantly find itself there. If man here below delights in the rapidity of his movements; if he borrows the speed of other animals, and urges all the resources of nature to hurry him over the surface of his native earth, and feels a sensation of joy and triumph in the passage,—what will be his emotions, when, in another world, his elastic frame shall be gifted with the rapidity of spirit; when the whole expanse of creation shall be set free before him; when time and space shall be annihilated to him, or rather put into his own hands; and the new heavens and the new earth, where he shall take his pastime, shall not contain within their boundless extent any two points which his rapid flight shall not join in an instant!

Another of the properties, which our bodies will assume at the resurrection, is called *clarity*, or brightness, a supernatural light, which will issue from them, and invest them in everlasting beauty. Light is the most wonderful of all created substances, as well as the most glorious and exhilarating. Hence it is represented as forming the vesture of the Deity and the dazzling pavilion in which he resides. *He is clothed with light as with a garment*, says the Psalmist: *he dwells*, says the apostle, *in light inaccessible;* in light, which at once displays and shrouds his inscrutable majesty. Even our coarse, terrestrial flame is cheerful and pleasing; the sparkling gems that deck the nocturnal sky attract and exhilarate. The uplifted eye reposes with delight on the mild lustre of the clear full-orbed moon: but how glorious, how ravishing, is the refulgent splendor of the golden sun! How gorgeous the hues, which rising or setting he scatters over the heavens! his rich, his meridian effulgence! How welcome that flood of light with which he fills and deluges the vast realms of space! The moment he rises on our benighted world, joy and alacrity awake with him. How vivid is the glow

of fancy, which his bursting light kindles in the ravished spectator! How rich the lucid creation, which he conjures up before the eye! How bright the visions which float before the enraptured sense, as it basks in his enlivening beam! But, my brethren, glorious as this luminary is, one of its terrestrial purposes is to image to us the future glory of the children of the resurrection. Our Divine Redeemer himself refers to it for illustration. *The just*, says he, *shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* Instead of any of the coarse textures of this world, a vesture of light shall surround their celestial frames, a robe of glory be their covering. Yes, unquestionably, this low-born, opaque, earthly substance has this bright attribute awaiting it in reversion,—to be encircled with light as with a garment, to dart forth beams of unfading glory, and, rivalling our terrestrial sun in splendor, to surpass it infinitely in durability. Extravagant as this may perhaps appear to some, who have little conception of any other than earthly grandeur, and, though born and bred in the centre of religion, are strangers to its sublimest privileges: it is no less certain than wonderful. There is no danger of exaggerating the supernatural rewards of a God at once all-powerful and all-bountiful; or of overstraining that in description, which *neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.*

Great, however, and glorious as are the three endowments of glorified bodies already enumerated, they would still be incomplete but for the fourth and last, called *impassibility*, which secures them from every alloy of pain, or evil, or imperfection, and insures to them immortality. In all the plenitude of this attribute, our triumphant Saviour evidently rises on this day. *Christ being now risen*, says St. Paul, *cannot die or suffer any more.* His mortal career was long and painful; but it is now ended. As he emphatically exclaimed on the cross: *It is consummated.* It was wonderful to think that a God should become capable of suffering, and ever bow down his sacred head under the stroke of mortality. But, if the world has once witnessed the amazing spectacle, it never shall again: it was the prodigy of eternity, never to be repeated. *Christ has died once*, says the apostle, *but he now dieth no more.* Whilst he lived among us, his sacred frame was subject to all those infirmi-

ties under which we labor and sigh—cold, hunger, thirst, fatigue; and we have seen that he had plentiful experience of their bitterness; but, now that he has risen from death, that last and direst of our calamities, he has imparted to his frame a sovereign virtue which shall render it for ever proof against such contingencies for the future.

And, my brethren, while we, the members of this divine Head, yet linger in this land of tears, how consoling is it to know and to reflect that the same exalted privilege, another day, awaits *us*. Pain, as being the violent state of our nature, is our dread and abhorrence. How carefully do we shun it! how anxiously do we labor to remove or assuage it! And yet, all our vigilance is inadequate, our cares are ineffectual: its protruding thorns arrest and lacerate us in every path of life. What son of Adam can boast ignorance of this sad inheritance of our flesh? who has not groaned under some or other of its immensely varied inflictions? If there be any one so singularly fated, he shall not carry his boast with him to the grave; humanity shall yet pay its indebted pang, with a severity perhaps proportioned to his past ominous exemption. Hateful ingredient! could we extract it out of life, we might almost retrieve our fallen state, and scarcely regret our lost felicity. But no! my brethren, this is not to be hoped for in our probationary existence: another order of things is prepared for us. We must wait till that predestined hour when the gem of immortality, now implanted in our earthly nature by our Redeemer, shall bud forth and invest it in other attributes. It shall then become, like himself, impassible and immortal: it *shall neither suffer nor die any more.*

It shall not suffer: *They shall neither hunger nor thirst*, says St. John, *neither shall the sun fall upon them nor any heat.* The renovated frame shall be perfect in all its parts; its minutest organs, new set and nicely attempered to each other, shall play in eternal harmony, and never again by the slightest jarring interrupt the perennial peace of its blissful partner.

As the body in its new state shall never suffer, so, by a natural consequence, it shall never die any more. As it shall never grow, so it shall never waste; as it shall never advance to perfection, being already perfect, so it shall never decline from it. Though made up of parts, earthly in their extraction, and in

their original nature evanescent and perishable, it shall never, by any accident or change, lessen or diminish them; and, after an eternity of duration, still flourish in all the primeval freshness of celestial youth, health, and beauty. Yes, my brethren, wonderful as it seems, it is again not more wonderful than certain, that this same body, now so frail, corruptible, and perishing, not only liable to die, but every day, I may say, actually dying, shall hereafter be so constituted that *Death*, as St. Paul says, *shall no more have dominion over it.* It shall be out of the reach, not only of *death*, but of the possibility of death. Eternity, and eternity alone, shall be the measure of its new life. Now so frail and transitory, it shall become, even in this respect, the rival and coequal of its spiritual associate, shall boast a parallel immortality, and coexist with their common creator and God in the infinitude of eternity.

Having thus prepared these frames of ours for their future mansion, it remains for us now to fit out the place which we are to inhabit. But here, how much are we at a loss! Where shall we find the colors to paint this ethereal scene? where the materials to build up to our imagination this heaven-wrought fabric, this palace of God and the children of God? Alas! we have only the poor and coarse materials of this world; and, among its glories and its delights, the choicest and richest is still single and scanty, whereas heaven is at once the comprehension and perfection of all. Wherefore, the Scripture, finding no single object in life of sufficient extent and import, has designated it by several different terms. Sometimes it is called a city, sometimes a kingdom; at one time a paradise, at another a banquet and a marriage-feast. What we can do is to choose from all, and collect their several advantages, and combine them in one rich and comprehensive assemblage.

Conceive, then, for our purpose a fair and lovely region, canopied over with the most clear azure sky, enjoying at once all the mild tranquillity of the softest night and all the glories of the most brilliant day. It is to have no habitations, no tents, being itself one comprehensive receptacle, *the tabernacle of God with men.* It has no temple; God himself is its temple: it has no sun; God himself is its light; his universal presence its delightful atmosphere. It is to be a kingdom and a city; that

is to say, spacious as the one, compact as the other; so extensive as to allow full and free range to its millions of happy inhabitants, and yet so united as to bind all the blissful citizens together in the most close and familiar intercourse.

As to those ambrosial fruits and flowers which belong to this paradise of God, those delicious viands which cover the table of this celestial banquet, we are not made acquainted with their nature; only certain it is, that, as every sense shall have its proper and sanctioned gratification, even the meanest shall not be without its appropriate zest. Then, the most balmy fragrance shall everywhere breathe in this ethereal paradise, the most rich and delicious frankincense shall perfume this temple of the living God. The ears of the blessed shall be regaled and charmed with the soft and mellifluous accents of their fellows in bliss, their brothers in love, and their whole souls be ravished and transported with that celestial music which for ever floats and swells in this lovely region. It is well known what power music exercises over our nature; how it rules the soul at pleasure, melts, lulls, rouses, and ravishes it; how it swells the imagination, fills it with a thousand pleasing visions, transports it in a moment through airy regions of delight, and elevates it to a pitch of ecstasy far beyond the reach of any other human heart. And, if this be the effect of our earthly strains, of those scanty and imperfect numbers which man is able to elicit from the coarse instruments of his own hands, judge what must be the power of the celestial music; of those sounds which vibrate from the harps of seraphs; of those melting airs in which the lovers of heaven hymn and respond to to one another; and of that rich tide of harmony which bursts, at intervals, from the full choir of the blessed! It is only in those rare and rapid moments, when the soul is under the influence of this pleasing power, that we are able to form a due conception of the ecstatic enjoyment produced by the concord of sweet sounds; and our best way of expressing the sensation is to say, that it lifts us to heaven: but, alas! the emotion here is as transient as the airy vibration that occasioned it; whereas, in heaven it will be as permanent as it is charming.

But the most exquisite, as well as the most abundant and diversified of man's enjoyments, enter by the most perfect of his senses;

and who next shall be able to tell us what the sight of the blessed shall enjoy? what those celestial visions with which it shall be for ever regaled? Here we are utterly at a loss; we have no images, no characters, no colors to paint with; the best that the sacred penman himself could say was, *that its walls were built with precious stones, and its streets paved with gold.*

But the inhabitants themselves of this happy abode are its greatest ornament. If a pleasing form here below is found to communicate through the eye a sudden delight to the soul, what must it be to behold that assembly of celestial beauty where all are so perfect, so amiable, so charming; where the King of beauty and glory himself clothes them, all and each, with a portion of his own celestial charms, that they may be eternally enchanting in his own eyes, and in those of one another! What a feast for the soul must flow from the sight of all the heavenly hierarchy, of the bright angels in their several orders, all different, yet all delightful; of the assembled saints of every rank and profession, from every tongue and nation of the earth, each with his peculiar mark and distinction, and forming together a galaxy of glory, most richly and infinitely diversified!

This is the land, too, as of beauty, so of beautiful and chaste love. Here all love, and are loved; here is no stranger, no foreigner, no alien; all are well known, intimately united, brothers and bosom friends. Here, though there is difference of rank, there is no envy: though there is one least, there is no one little; though there is one last, there is no one overlooked: all are united together in one golden chain of love, which transmits to every breast the felicity of all. Who shall tell us what are the endearments, the smiles, the caresses of these heavenly lovers? Those reciprocations of feeling, those transfusions of heart, those interchanges of soul, which are the natural and, in heaven, the holy and sanctioned intercourse of love? There is nothing so delightful to the soul as to know, that it is beloved by another whom itself admires and loves: what, then, must it be to be the conscious object of the pure affections of so many thousands! What must be the glow of transport felt in that breast, on which radiates at once all the love of all the blessed in heaven! And ah! what is even this, to the thought of being loved by God himself! of being tenderly cherished and embraced

by a God of infinite charms and infinite perfections! But this would carry me too far; this would, in fact, be to enter upon a topic new, exhaustless, ill-suited to a mixed audience, and infinitely above my power. Here, therefore, I stop.

I have mentioned some of the privileges, and alluded to some of the pleasures, that await us. Of what I might say only a small part has been said: yet, where is the man whose ambition would not be satisfied even with this? If there be one to whom it appears that there is any thing still wanting, any favorite delight or enjoyment to complete his felicity, let him freely add it to the collection. Let him give the reins to his imagination. Here that wonderful power has scope for its full play; this is the sphere for its legitimate exercise. Many have employed it idly or criminally, in framing to themselves a paradise in this vale of tears, in dressing out the airy visions of poetry, or the voluptuous regions of romance. How much better, more noble, and more conformable to the purpose for which it was given, to exercise it in forming such a picture of our future abode as may at once delight, encourage, and attract the soul! Indulge, then, in the gayest dreams of fancy. Let imagination enrich the scene with all that your hearts can desire, and finish and complete my rude sketch with every auspicious circumstance. God himself invites you to the attempt; he indirectly challenges your utmost efforts; and he plainly tells you, that all that you can conceive is still little; less than a shadow of those realities, purchased for you by your divine Redeemer, and this day pledged and secured to you. Oh, the boundless liberality of our God! After all, let me repeat, we have been endeavoring to contemplate only the inferior part of the joys of heaven, only the corporal, the material, the visible portion of the sons of resurrection. If this be so glorious, the external, the superficial, the apparent; what must be the internal, the unseen, the unconceived?

Justly then, my brethren, may we conclude as we commenced. *This is the day, which the Lord hath made; let us exult and rejoice thereon.* Can we choose but rejoice at the glorious prospect which this day opens to us? And can there be any heart so insensible as not to feel, on this auspicious morning, the kindling glow of gratitude and love to so great and good a Re-

deemer? We little thought of this, when we saw him bleeding on the cross; we were absorbed in his sufferings and could expect nothing beyond; but he, as we now find, had time to think of this and prepare it for us, and, while apparently sunk in distress, no doubt cherished in secret the anticipation, and warmed with its consoling consciousness his expiring bosom.

If, then, my brethren, we are subjected to the sad sentence of mortality, are we not, this day, fully relieved from its terrors? Can we, after this, shrink at death? Can we, with such bright prospects in view, hesitate to descend into the dust? No, exultingly may we exclaim with the apostle: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?* As true Christians, then, as heirs of resurrection, let us no longer be dismayed at the vanquished foe, but meet his necessary approach with tranquillity and confidence: and on all occasions in life, when the season of penance returns, when the hour of trial approaches, and when sickness or calamity plants the cross in our view, and calls upon us to follow our great leader and embrace it, let us lift up our eyes to this cheering prospect, to the splendid vista, which will so soon break upon us, the thrice happy Easter of resurrection and immortality.

Sermon XXIX.

Low Sunday.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

Now when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them: Peace be to you.—JOHN xx. 19.

THE Evangelist has left us to conceive the feelings of the different apostles, at this first and sudden appearance of their newly-risen Saviour among them. He leaves to our imagination the bitter contrition and self-abhorrence of Peter, trembling, in conscious guilt, lest he should be upbraided for the perfidy of his denial, till the heavenly smile of his Divine Master meets his dubious glance, and, assuring him that his crime has been already forgiven, changes his terrors into redoubled affection:—the ardent love, the unalloyed satisfaction, the rapture of joy with which the beloved disciple, St. John, welcomed, in the glory of his resurrection, him whom he had not deserted in disgrace, whom he had pitied in torture, and attended in death; the steadfast gaze, the undisguised astonishment of the rest, and the mingled doubts, hopes, and fears, which struggled for mastery in their beating hearts, and varied the expression of each countenance, in proportion as each was conscious of steadier fidelity or of more early desertion. Naturally, and without wronging the apostles, for they were yet weak, we may suppose them thus variously agitated at the unexpected apparition. But, my brethren, in fact, in very truth, the occasion furnished no peculiar grounds for these feelings. He, who then stood visible before them in his humanity, had never been absent from them in his Divinity. And thus I arrive at the point,

upon which I propose to dwell, that grand and practical subject, the presence of God. Simple and plain as it seems in the announcement, I do not hesitate to call it *grand;* because it bears immediately on one of the attributes of the Deity: but I chiefly insist on its being practical and useful. Open any book of spiritual instruction, and you will find this among its prominent topics; you will find its remembrance and practice inculcated, as at once a most powerful auxiliary in the path of perfection, and a most efficacious restraint in the ways of passion and sin. Accordingly, read the lives of the saints of God, and you will see that they owed a great part of their proficiency to their attention to this point; read the edifying narratives of the most celebrated penitents, and you will see their conversion often dated from a sense of the divine presence suddenly beaming in upon them, and arresting them in their thoughtless career. And yet, how many are there that think on the awful presence of God, or are sensible of its influence over the soul? Who, in these days, are accustomed to animate their feeble virtue with the remembrance of the all-seeing eye? Who restrain themselves from passion or sin, by the sense of an invisible judge? I wish, therefore, on this day, to raise the subject in some degree from its unmerited neglect, and to point out the great practical morality in which it abounds. In this view, it will not be necessary for me to embarrass myself with any studied division. I shall merely consider, one by one, the various senses in which the Divine Presence presents itself to our contemplation, and, as they pass in review, endeavor to draw from each such reflections as may be most applicable and most useful.

In order to enter with effect into this great subject, let us first give a little expansion to our minds, and consider the presence of God, in its universal sense, or, as it is technically termed, his ubiquity. The uttermost stretch of pagan sublimity went no farther than to place its imaginary deity on the summit of a lofty mountain, surrounded by his fraternity of inferior divinities. How different are the conceptions and language of revealed truth. *God*, says the prophet Jeremias, *fills the heaven and the earth. The heavens*, says Solomon, *and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. Peradventure*, says the book of

Job, *thou wilt comprehend the steps of God, and wilt find out the Almighty perfectly? He is higher than heaven, and what wilt thou do? he is deeper than hell, and how wilt thou know? The measure of him is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.* But the most interesting passage of all, is that of the Psalmist: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art there. If I take my wings in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.* The idea, then, which religion furnishes of the Deity is, that he is that vast essence, which fills, surrounds, and infinitely transcends all essence existing or conceivable; that he is that immense ocean of being, which has neither shore, surface, nor bottom; that, to borrow an illustration from the noblest of human sciences, he is that vast circle, or rather sphere, the centre of which is everywhere, and the circumference nowhere. The world of being, even as the eye discovers it, is vast and immeasurable; as philosophy investigates it, it is found to be endless and unfathomable; yet its remotest outskirts are near, are intimate, are central to the Divinity. And should imagination employ all her powers in its further extension for ages, all would be inadequate; she would be no nearer the extremity, if I may so speak, of the Divine Presence, than she was at the distant point from which she commenced her labors. Here I stop; for the human mind is utterly baffled by the subject.

From this higher contemplation of the Deity, we will now descend to a nearer and more immediate sense of his divine presence; namely, to that which considers him as surrounding and supporting us. Yes, in this vast being we live, and move, and are; in this universal ocean we swim, just as the inhabitants of the waters in the liquid element which surrounds them. Wherever we are, we are in close contact with his divine essence; wherever we move, we move within him. The inhabitants of the deep depend for their existence on the encompassing waters, and languish and perish when withdrawn from them; and the natives of the air in like manner immediately pant and expire on the privation of their invisible medium. These are plain physical truths, known and familiar to us all, and I only introduce

them for the purpose of connecting with them a similar truth in the moral line, with which, if we are acquainted, I fear we are but little moved. It is this: that we stand in a similar relation to the divine essence: that is to say, were the Deity for one moment to suspend the effects of his presence, in that instant we should return into nothing. While we readily acknowledge the gift of original existence, we are apt to overlook this of our continued existence; and yet, both philosophy and religion concur in showing it to be equally real and indispensable. *If thou turnest away thy face*, says the psalmist, *they shall be troubled; thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail and return to their dust.*

From this principle it evidently follows, that all the creatures of God are constantly dependent upon him for every particular and circumstance of existence; every breath we draw, we draw not only in him, but by him; every motion we make is not only within him, but by his co-operation; every exercise, in fine, of any one of our faculties, mental as well as corporal, is thus intimately interwoven with, and dependent on, his divine presence. If this be true, my brethren, and its truth admits of no question, what severe consequences does it induce on the great mass of society! For, living in the midst of this all-essential presence, dependent upon it for every motion, indebted to it every instant, how many are mindful or even aware of this dependence? Perhaps, in this view, the truth may be too remote to strike; but, it has nearer and more sensible applications. It were not expecting too much of a rational creature to look for his gratitude or his remembrance of his Creator at the daily return and regular supply of his necessities: yet, how many are there who sit down habitually to their meals without the slightest recurrence, either in thought or words, to Him who supplies their abundance? though provided with a stimulus to their gratitude in thousands of their less fortunate fellow-creatures, whom they know to be not only destitute of such abundance, but craving even the poor necessaries of life! How many, again, are there who take their nocturnal repose seemingly in perfect ignorance of any being to whom they owe its security and its comforts, and rise from it with as little sense of any preserver from its danger and uncertainty as if Providence were a mere name.

Were these pagans, it might be less surprising in men who knew not God; but in Christians, the insensibility and ingratitude appear monstrous. How forcible and stinging, yet how just, in this case, is the reproach of the inspired writings: *The ox knoweth his owner and the ass his master's crib, but Israel has not known me, and my people have not understood.*

Another view of the subject brings us still more closely and intimately within the divine presence. Not only are we in God, but God is within us. All the common comparisons made use of to illustrate the divine presence are obviously deficient. The fishes of the sea are immersed in and encompassed by the element on which they depend; but the connection stops there. Our material bodies are pressed on all sides, but not penetrated by the invisible fluid in which we move; but the divine presence not only comprehends and surrounds, but actually fills, penetrates, and pervades all and each of his creatures. We may, in order to form a more correct idea of the manner in which this material world is copresent with its Creator, liken it to a globe of the purest crystal, suspended in the ardent beams of a clear mid-day sun. The subtle emanations of that most wonderful of created substances, light, not only investing on all sides, but entering and filling every pore and every particle of its pellucid medium, will furnish us with a better, though still an inadequate, image of the real manner in which God is present with his creatures. His all-pervading essence is at once central in the most recondite centre of our material bodies, and intimate in the most intimate recess of the soul.

The moral application, my brethren, which I would make of this sense of the divine omnipresence must, I think, be sufficiently obvious. If this divine Majesty is thus intimately present within us, if he co-dwell with our very inmost souls, how easy is it to form an idea that he must necessarily be privy to every thought that arises within them! Not an idea, not an image, not the slightest emotion, can spring up in that *inscrutable abyss*,—the heart of man,—but his all-searching beams instantly irradiate it! *The eyes of the Lord*, says the Wise Man, *are brighter than the sun, looking into the hearts of men, into the most secret parts.* How little is this interesting truth, I will not say known, but remembered and reflected on by men. How

common is it, I fear, even for Christians, to indulge indiscriminately in every variety of idea, without the least restraint from this intimate presence of their God! How many, for example, while they hate and loudly condemn pride and vanity in the conduct of others, secretly foster in their own hearts all the suggestions of those passions, as if they had no internal witness of the odious deformities! How many nourish in their breasts all that is uncharitable and bitter towards their neighbor; and, at the very time that they have professions of kindness and friendship on their lip, are secretly censuring, despising, and ridiculing him in their hearts; as if they flattered themselves, that they were secure in their deceitful cover; as if there were not One at least, who reads and reprobates all their foul duplicity. How many, in fine, while their exterior is regulated and decorous, suffer their minds in secret to wander over all the unchaste ideas, images, and suggestions, which a prurient imagination can excite, and, while they blush at the cognisance of a fellow-mortal, either heed not or forget the all-seeing eye, which is all the while looking with abhorrence on their guilty conceptions. There is something which renders this truth still more formidable. On the mind of man, those various images and ideas chase one another, like the shadows of the field, and often leave as little trace behind them; but in the mind of God, they become permanent and eternal. It is as easy to him to know the remotest past, as the immediate present. He is conscious of what *was*, as well as what *is*. Hence he not only embraces simultaneously in his capacious mind all the present and actual conceptions of all existing beings, but also retains, with the exactest fidelity, even the most faint and fugitive ideas of all his creatures. It is in this sense, that the intimate presence and cognisance of the Deity becomes truly formidable. For how great will be the amazement and consternation of the slothful Christian, to see all the iniquitous thoughts and desires, that have ever fled across his heedless mind, again retraced in glaring characters before him, and striking him with conscious guilt! And every Christian knows that this will infallibly be his situation, at the great day of judgment, in respect of every unjust, uncharitable, and unchaste thought, which he has not recalled and obliterated by tears of repentance.

There yet remains a fourth sense of the presence of God, no less replete with instruction. The Lord is, in a particular manner, present here in this sacred temple. Though, as we have shown above, his divine essence fills and pervades all space, yet it has ever been the feeling of mankind, and a feeling sanctioned by faith, that he reposes, and is, in a manner, more present in places set aside for his solemn worship. There the majesty of the Godhead in a more especial manner dwells on earth: there his all-seeing eye is particularly watchful: there his divine ear bends in secret to the supplications of the repentant and the devout: there his divine hand most exerts its energy, wounding and softening the heart of the sinner, touching and warming the fervent soul, and elevating and absorbing the contemplative. There, in fine, he works his greatest wonders in the justification and sanctification of souls; works, in comparison of which all that passes in external nature, is, in his divine estimation, secondary and unimportant.

How venerable was the ancient temple of the Jews, on whose altars were offered the only sacrifices, which, in the whole world, the Deity was pleased to acknowledge and accept! If so, my brethren, how august, how sacred must those temples be, where is daily offered that great sacrifice, which has accomplished and superseded all those ancient rites:—that matin oblation, which is the great treasure and glory of the Church of God, and, though so overlooked and slighted by thoughtless Christians, is, beyond comparison, the noblest and grandest action which the sun shines upon in his daily course:—that ineffable mystery, that stupendous invention of infinite love and wisdom, in which all is divine:—God offered to God by the hands of God!

Again, how great was the majesty of that portion of the ancient temple, called the Holy of Holies, enclosed and curtained round for the particular presence of the Deity, and for ever shut up from the intrusive eye of man! How solemn the silence that for ever reigned in its hallowed precincts! how awful the darkness that eternally sat behind its veil! And, on that single and select day of the year, on which the high-priest alone of all mortals was allowed, after the most solemn preparations, to enter; with how cautious and trembling a step must he have trod within the sacred precincts, and breathed the immediate air

of the Divine Presence! And yet, when he did enter, his eyes saw nothing, his faith discovered to him nothing but certain rude symbols, the ark of the covenant and the vessel of manna. What would he have thought, what would he have felt, had he been introduced to the reality of all those figures, and stood where we stand? Yes, my brethren, turn your eyes to the true Holy of Holies, in these our Christian temples, and see where all those shadowy symbols disappear, and give place to the real presence of an incarnate God, the true ark of the covenant, the real manna and bread of heaven! What though our corporal eyes discover him not under his assumed veils? Is he, on that account, the less present, in his humanity or his divinity? Shall we make either the one or the other, in the mysteries of an incomprehensible God, dependent on our organic discernment? Faith is evidence superior to sense. From his concealed throne within our tabernacles, he looks upon us with the same eyes with which he saw on earth: he hears us with the same ears: he discerns all the motions of our souls, and reads, to the very bottom of our hearts, every single affection that rises or reigns there, as we stand heedless and unthinking round his hallowed altar, and wander in imagination, perhaps, upon every object but himself. Nor is this hidden King, who has thus established his majestic throne on our altars, however forgotten or overlooked by ungrateful and insensible man, without his appropriate attendants: for it has ever been the belief of the Church of God, that his heavenly court incessantly wait upon him in secret, and throng our temples; and, were we as conversant with the world of spirits as we are with that of matter, and could discern its objects with the same facility, we should doubtless see ourselves intermingled and surrounded with these heavenly spirits, passing and repassing, bending in adoration, or wrapt in motionless awe. This has been seen and recorded, for our edification, by those holy persons in the Church of God, whose superior fervor and purity promoted them to this supernatural illumination.

On collecting, my brethren, and imbodying these reflections, what must be our sentiments when we observe the general demeanor of Christians in these sacred edifices? for, it was mainly for this object I introduce the topic. But here let us, instead of wasting our attention upon others, employ it on our-

selves. Let us not direct our criticism in this particular on another nation, who will answer for themselves, and perhaps find some extenuation of their fault in a peculiarity of character or manner; let us turn it on ourselves, where it will certainly find a more useful, if not a juster, application. How often, then, in these places, and perhaps on the most solemn occasions, do we suffer every casual object that presents itself to divert our attention from the commanding and awful presence of the God of Heaven! How often have we not allowed a trivial accident or irregularity to disturb our seriousness, and, abandoning all sense of common decorum, betrayed ourselves in levity and laughter! and then, with an aggravating insensibility, made light of the offence, and pretended even to justify it on the ground of want of self-command: as if such an exculpation would ever be admitted, or even attempted, in the court of the meanest of earthly kings, and as if we were not in the presence and under the very eye of the King of Kings! How often are not Christians to be seen assembling in these sacred resorts ostensibly, perhaps, for some religious or charitable purpose, but, to judge by their looks and demeanor, for no higher purpose than to talk over the commercial or political news of the day, and interchange their domestic intelligence? How often, again, in the other sex, have we not seen piety immediately make way for ceremony, and converse with the Almighty easily interrupted for the frivolity of human intercourse! How often, in front of this hallowed altar, have I not been a witness to devotion and recollection dissipated in a moment in the idle compliments and caresses, and all the majesty of the Godhead slighted for the presence and conversation of some insignificant mortal! as if they were not seen and marked by a rebuking eye; as if they were not in the immediate presence, and almost in the personal contact, of the incarnate Word.

Let not those who are conscious of the applicability of these remarks wonder if they find their devotion dried up, and their prayers ineffectual; they perhaps may trace the misfortune to their levity and irreverences. Profanation of the house of God is not so slight an evil as many conceive it; let every one remember that it was the first and the last sin on which the Son of God exercised his public zeal. When he, who, on other occasions

was meekness itself, began and ended his public ministry by showing his indignation at this, and, with fire in his countenance and a scourge in his hand, drove the profaners of the temple out of its precincts; the evil must be more grievous, and its consequences more serious than we commonly apprehend. One of these consequences is the discredit thus thrown on piety and the service of God, and the disgrace entailed on his pure religion; another is, that by such behaviour, the entrance into that pure religion is in a manner closed, or at least a stone of scandal thrown across its threshold in the way of those who, educated in error, but accustomed to religious decorum, are shocked at appearances so contrary to our natural principles, and will not believe that the God of truth can possibly reside where his presence is so slightly felt. This indeed will not be enough to justify them, but it will suffice to condemn you. From these various views, my brethren, which I have presented to you, many are the practical lessons that may be drawn: first, from the universal presence of the Godhead in and beyond all space, learn to elevate and expand your minds occasionally with that sublime idea, and to undervalue all finite and created objects; second, from a sense of your constant immersion in this universal presence, and your vital dependence on it, learn to raise a frequent eye of gratitude to so constant and unwearied a Benefactor; third, from a conviction of his immediate presence within you, determine to watch vigilantly over your own hearts, and instantly to expel from them every thought or impression that would meet the rebuke of his all-seeing eye; fourth, from a remembrance of the more intense presence of God in these his consecrated abodes, be careful ever to appear there with the utmost respect and decorum. Upon this last I particularly insist: if you elsewhere overlook the presence of God, at least remember it here. Your salvation might be shown to be suspended in some measure on this single point. For, without a due sense of the presence of God, it is impossible to pray well: and, without praying well, it is impossible to live well: this last is an axiom in religion; he who knows it not, is a stranger to the first principles, and he who feels it not, is remote from the essential spirit of religion. Human virtues, mere moral worth, believe me, are here of no account:

they are something before men, but are nothing before God; they avail something to this life, but nothing to eternity, and, therefore, nothing to salvation; that merit which is to save us springs from grace alone, and grace is given to prayer; and prayer, I repeat it, without a strong and collected sense of the presence of Him before whom and to whom we pray, is something worse than ineffectual. That prayer which is merely from the lips,—that prayer which is merely of form and routine,—that prayer which is for men rather than for God,—that prayer ascends up, if it ascends at all, as a mockery before God; it is obviously rather a hinderance than a help to salvation; and those who are conscious of no other, may justly tremble for their safety.

Let me, in conclusion, just point to the contrast presented by the behaviour of the saints in this particular. How engaging and edifying is the picture which their lives paint to us of their appearance and demeanor in the house of God! How absorpt were they in the divine presence! How filled and penetrated with God! All other things were, at that moment, as nothing to them, and struck their sense in vain. The very sight of their calm and collected countenances inspired devotion; it was impossible to view them without interest, without veneration for them, and some share in their feelings towards the great Being whom they adored. For genuine piety has naturally a strong hold on the human mind; the tepid and worldly feel its merit, while they shrink from its practice; and even the infidel, who scoffs at it, pays homage to it in his heart. These holy men, in their pious assemblies, presented a picture, imperfect indeed, but still impressive and charming, of the court of heaven, where all, who surround the celestial throne are with unceasing delight for ever in an attitude of devout homage, where every eye is fixed on God, every tongue employed about him, and every thought and motion directed towards him; where no extraneous object ever intrudes on the soul, nor any distraction ever turns her aside from him; but He alone, the great centre of all things, at once fills, pervades, envelopes, attracts, and absorbs every faculty in himself. My brethren, for this, and for this alone, we were created; to a resemblance with this, prayer was intended to raise us, in order afterwards to transport us to its reality.

Sermon XXIX.

Second Sunday after Easter.

CHRIST OUR MODEL.

Dearly beloved, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps. Who, when he was reviled, did not revile; when he suffered he threatened not: but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly. Who his own self bore our sins in his body upon the tree: that we being dead to sins, should live to justice.—1 Peter ii. 21, 23, 24.

In this passage, which the Church has selected for our instruction this Sunday, and which will appear unseasonable only to those who overlook the intimate connection between the debasement and the joys of Christ, and who forget that *it behoved him to suffer, and so to enter into his glory*, the apostle presents our crucified Redeemer to us, as our model and our consolation. If other views, that may be taken of his passion, are more sublime, I can conceive none more interesting; I know of none that is more necessary. For, who is there among us, that does not stand in need of support and consolation? We are full of miseries, and at the same time we are full of complaints; we deserve our evils; we acknowledge it; and yet, under their infliction, we are weak and heartless. All our evils, all that we most feel, and dread, and complain of, may be classed under two heads,—shame and pain,—humiliations and sufferings; corresponding exactly, you will observe, to the two great and conspicuous characters under which the Son of God was foreshown to mankind by the Prophet Isaiah, when he described him as *despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity*. Let us, then, contemplate our Saviour in these two capacities, as the man of ignominies, and the man of sorrows; and while we trace his progress through the

chief stages of his passion, let us examine whether, in any situation in which Providence may place us, we can claim a title to utter the least word of complaint. My plan, in treating this vast subject, shall be to consider the sufferings of our Redeemer first, as the more sensible and obvious, then his humiliations in the previous stages of his passion, until these two concurrent streams unite and swell into that mingled flood of sorrows and ignominies, which overwhelmed him on Calvary.

In the first place, he was pleased to suffer by anticipation. The dread of impending pain is often worse than the reality; but most human sufferers are spared this aggravation, and even the forewarned and expecting victim of public justice sees not beforehand the appalling apparatus, nor can form any other than a very indistinct and imperfect idea of the painful scene which is to terminate his existence. The Son of God anticipates fully and minutely; and in the garden of Gethsemani, he suffers his foreknowledge to bring accurately before him, and his imagination fearfully to depict, every circumstance and particular, every torment, every outrage, every indignity:—to say nothing here of those extraordinary and altogether superhuman sorrows, which are so peculiarly his own,—the imputed sins of a lost world and the adopted vengeance of his eternal Father. At this dreadful vision, he exhibits all that anguish, which is so natural to our infirmity; he is seen fearful, trembling, agitated, restless, and *sad even to death*, as he intimates to his apostles; coming to them for comfort under his agony; then in his disappointment having recourse to prayer, from prayer retracing his staggering steps to his apostles; and, on finding them insensible and even asleep, returning again to prayer, and entreating heaven to alter its determinations; a lively and pathetic picture of what we are, as well as a consoling model to us, under distress and suffering. If we estimate suffering by its external expression, we may form some idea of what he feels, by that extraordinary appearance, in which this scene of distress terminates,—a profuse sweat of blood. As no internal suffering of man was ever so great, so none assuredly ever declared itself in this manner.

So far he suffers only from himself, from his own free agency: now commence his sufferings from others; and taking the lead of these you will find, with surprise, his own friends and ad-

herents. It is not often that men have to complain of being betrayed by their bosom friends: yet this select pang the Son of God would also feel: he would endure the cruel sting of perfidy and false love. When you hear the now odious name of Judas, you must remember, that he was really the friend, the familiar, the confidant of Jesus, trusted by him, loved by him, caressed by him, with the same affection as the rest. What an example and proof had we of it in the last supper! This man now appears in front of his advancing enemies, not, as might have been supposed, to intercept them, to defend him, to die for him,—but to guide them to their prey; to mark him out to them beyond mistake, and to betray him personally into their hands. How does the manner of the black design enhance its atrocity! With a collected and smiling air, he comes up with confidence, and gives his kind master, as usual, the kiss of friendship. Ah! who can tell the mingled feelings of regret, repugnance, sorrow, and shame, which a salute so base and cruel must have shot through the bosom of the Son of God?

This suffering is soon followed by another of the same kind. If Judas proved faithless, he was long known, by his Master at least, to be false and corrupt; but Peter is the first and favorite disciple, the sincere adherent, the ardent lover, and sworn defender of Jesus. Yet, scarcely is his Master become the secure captive of his enemies, when Peter is heard first faltering at his name, then declaring aloud that he is not of his disciples, and at last cursing himself if ever he knew the man! The man,—ah! what a word in the mouth of Peter! and all this in the presence and in the hearing of this once loved Master. Let us remember this when we, who are ourselves monsters of ingratitude to God, are treated with ingratitude by men; when we are slighted, or fancy we are, by our acquaintance and friends; when in our wants and distresses we are abandoned and disowned by those who ought from every motive to stand by and support us; a conduct certainly not common among men, and never found to match with the scene before us. Let us think on it, and we shall not complain.

From his enemies, into whose hands he is now fallen, we shall be less surprised to see him suffer; though we should not easily have anticipated the nature and extent of his sufferings. It

were long to dwell on all that he endured from the fierce mob, that with swords and clubs came to seize him; from the impassioned courts, where he was dragged to judgment; from the rude and brutal rabble, in whose hands he passed the sleepless night; their violence, their buffets, their outrages of every description, are not even recorded for our satisfaction. From them, however, we may anticipate that his blood will soon begin to flow; but who would have suspected the manner of it? who would have thought that the amiable and majestic person of the Son of God was to be subjected to the cruel punishment of the ignominious scourge? It is well known to be the treatment only of slaves, runaways, and criminals, either the lowest or the most incorrigible of men; others stand in little apprehension of it, and most would probably choose death itself in preference. Yet this species of suffering also the Son of God adopted for himself and endured. We shall be able to judge of its extent and cruelty, if we take notice that it is not inflicted under any idea of justice or measure of proportion, but unlimitedly, and as an expedient for his deliverance. He is to be so long scourged, and to that degree that he is a matchless spectacle of pity, a sight calculated to subdue the hard hearts of his enemies, and quench their thirst for his blood. Hence the pathetic description of his prophet: *There is no beauty in him nor comeliness. We have thought him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. From the sole of the foot to the top of the head, there is no soundness in him; wounds and bruises and swelling sores.* Here is a pattern for us, under our corporal ailments, a spectacle of bodily pain, at the sight of which all the plaintive children of disease must certainly be silent. If this last torment has left any part of him untouched; if there is yet wanting any thing to complete the torture of a frame, already exhausted by so long an interval passed without rest, sleep, food, or support of any kind, the next scene will fully accomplish it, and literally crown him the Man of Sorrows. You anticipate me; your imagination outruns me: and it is well it does; for I know not how I shall describe a torment, the very thought of which racks the mind. Its effects are visible enough in those streaming lines of blood which mark and almost obliterate the visage of the sufferer; but ah! who shall

go to the source, and describe the cruel lacerations, the maddening pains of the infixed and imbedded thorns, deepened at intervals by the strokes of the wanton and unfeeling tormentors, and sharpened and aggravated by their scoffs and mockeries? This closes for the present the series of his sufferings, and leaves us at leisure to trace some of the humiliations which have kept pace with them; though you cannot but have observed how often these two intermingle and present themselves together.

In the first place, how naturally painful to his divine soul must have been that burst of ignominy which assailed him so suddenly and so violently on his apprehension. He had been hitherto held by the people in the highest respect; he had been frequently saluted the Son of David; but three days ago, he had been publicly hailed as the Messiah, and conducted into Jerusalem in a species of triumph as singular as it was glorious. And now he is seen hurried with shouts along the same road, and brought into Jerusalem as a public prisoner, bound and manacled, and encircled by the swords and clubs of his capturers. Jerusalem is roused by the tumult; numbers crowd to the novel spectacle, and from their doors and windows gaze at the prisoner as he passes, and wonder at the change; many, no doubt, with a commingled feeling of concern and pity, but a pity which in the minds of the fickle multitude soon yields to appearances, and sinks under the imposing display of public justice.

At the tribunal, to which in this condition he is abruptly hurried, the multiplied affronts which he receives must be supplied by our imagination; for they are not detailed for us There is one, however, too singular and too important to us to be passed over. While he stands before the tribunal of his judges, and replies with calmness and meekness to their misplaced and passionate interrogations, a low attendant of the court, reading in the eye of his masters the sure approval of his rudeness, steps forward, and strikes him violently on the face! Christians, consider well all the circumstances of this incident, the place, the occasion, the parties, the low menial, and the majestic Son of God. To conceive it better, arm yourselves with all your natural feelings; stand for a moment in the place of your Saviour, and receive in imagination the startling blow;

and feel, if you can, the force of such an ignominy, even in your own persons, men and sinners as you are: and then judge what must be its weight when it falls on the sacred person of the Son of God! What will you say to this, you who will bear nothing in the shape of affront, and will scarcely own it your duty; who hastily resent every slight, whether of accident or purpose, a word even, a look; and as for a blow, have come to think it an offence never to be forgiven? Ah, silence and shame can be your only answer. Other humiliations follow. He is buffeted, his evangelist tells us, his hair is torn, his beard plucked, he is blindfolded, he is spit upon!

All this, however, does not preclude another select humiliation. It is brought about in this manner. Pilate, too weak and wavering to liberate a man whom he saw to be innocent, avails himself of a pretext for sending him away to another tribunal. Herod learns his arrival with joy; not with the joy of sympathy, or any desire of redressing his wrongs, but with the hope of gratifying an idle curiosity. He receives him, on his appearance, with smiles and welcome, and, with a provoking levity, taking not the slightest notice of his complicated sufferings, questions him about his doctrine and his miracles, and concludes, by calling upon him to give the court a specimen of his wonderful powers. To such an address, the insult and pain of which, in such circumstances, must be felt by the coarsest mind, our Saviour returns a fixed silence. Again interrogated, solicited, and pressed, he is still silent. The weak and foolish Herod thinks that a man of such deportment, a man who would not, on such an occasion, gratify a prince, who would not even purchase his own rescue on such easy terms, must be destitute of common sense, must be some ignorant pretender, one of those weak characters, whom a deluded people have raised into note. He treats him as such, he proclaims him aloud to the court as such, and the court applauds the decision. He calls for a white garment, and clothes him with it, and thus arrayed sends him out again to the expecting populace, in the garb of a fool! Here the humiliation appears extreme and excessive; the Eternal Wisdom among us in the habit of a fool! It shows, at least, the depth of the wound of our pride, and what various and consummate examples were necessary for its cure. I will only ask,

whether, at such a spectacle, the most injured and debased of men has any thing to say? What follows it,—his reception in this garb among the licentious mob, their clamors, their scoffs, their laughter, their rude insults and violence,—you will better conceive, than I describe. Here he evidently loses the last remnant of public opinion, and his character seems utterly prostrate.

However, as if his humiliations were not yet complete, he still finds out another, less externally shameful indeed, but perhaps more keenly painful, as more refined and delicate. There is nothing of which we are more sensible than preference,—preference of all kinds; but when that preference is unworthy and unjust, if ever indeed it can really be so in our regard, it is then that we feel and keenly resent. Pilate, still wishing to save his prisoner, resolves to propose him to the people as a fit object for the exercise of their acknowledged privilege of having a state prisoner released to them at this great solemnity; and to make sure his point, contrasts him with an accomplished criminal, a robber and murderer, one of those men of blood who are the terror and abhorrence of society, and from whom it has no security but in their death. This man he singles out and joins with the meek and innocent Jesus, and asks the people which they will have, Barabbas or Christ? How profound and painful a humiliation does the very comparison imply! But the unheard-of decision leaves us no time to dwell upon that. Without hesitation they call out for Barabbas, and will have him in preference to the other. Therefore by the voice of a whole people Barabbas is better than Christ; though stained with recent blood and triple-dyed in guilt, he is fitter to live than Jesus; therefore deliver him up to us, and away with the other. Such is the import of their sentence, and how keenly must it have been felt by the sensible mind of our Saviour; for, though he doubtless accepted it with joy, for our comfort and example, yet so just and true a judge of merit could not but experience the deepest sense of inward shame at so ignominious a preference. Here, then, Christians is an answer to all your murmurs and complaints, in circumstances in any way similar. If even the meanest or worst of men is preferred before you, what will you,

or what can you say, when you remember Barabbas preferred before Christ?

This humiliation appears to have been chosen and prepared by our Saviour to close this portion of his humiliations and sufferings, and to bring on, as in effect it did, the catastrophe of his passion. *For Pilate said to them, What then shall I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?* And they answered: *Let him be crucified. And he delivered him up to them to be crucified.* Yes, my brethren, all that has preceded only prepares the way for the last great scene on Calvary, where his sufferings and humiliations will receive their full completion, and be displayed, not as hitherto, sometimes in private, often to a partial and passing view, but abroad and at large in the face of heaven and earth, to the free and leisurely inspection of the whole world.

View him, in the first place, in his character of Man of Sorrows, and see to what perfection he has realized it. Christians, you have so often heard the tragic tale of crucifixion that the mention of it little affects you; but as you are here purposely calculating the sufferings of your Saviour, you must for once form of it an exacter estimate. Conceive, then, you who shrink at the slightest puncture, what it must be to have the hands and feet pierced and lacerated with nails; what cruel starts and convulsions must vibrate through the agonizing frame at each stroke of the driving hammer; what a posture it must be, with the extremities thus pierced, to be stretched out and fastened down to the tree of the cross; the only part which remains at liberty—the head—crowned here with a torturing diadem, and pillowed on its thorny circle; what a situation, in this posture to be suspended in mid air on these lacerating supporters. What streams of blood must follow, what convulsive throes, what horrors of torture! The very thought horrifies the mind. To this soon succeed the cold sweat, the fainting swoon, the sick languor, the parching thirst. All this we must conceive; for of all the silent sufferer gives no intimation, except the last. He does, after an interval, exclaim, *I thirst;* but this is only to accomplish, not to relieve, his pain. They present him, under the thirst he complains of, gall and vinegar.

Yes, if any thing can aggravate his torments, it is the malice which surrounds him. As compassion soothes, malice sharpens

and redoubles pain; and that appears to be the only sentiment which his unexampled sufferings excite. His enemies, after accomplishing the bloody deed, stand under his cross, and feast their eyes with the cruel sight; they take a positive delight in all he suffers; he knows it, he feels it. Even his tender and heart-melting prayer for them, in which he tells them aloud that he still forgives them, seems to fall on them without the slightest impression. They cut his feelings with the keenest reproaches; they imbitter his soul with the most insulting taunts, and, worst of all, they wound his ears and his heart with the most shocking blasphemies. They scoff at his divinity; they ridicule his prophecies; they insult and defy his omnipotence, shaking their heads at him in scorn, and bidding him, as an effectual proof of his power, undo the work which they have done. It were some consolation if he had some friend at hand to support and soothe him; few sufferers want such a consolation. He had many; thousands admired and followed him, and numbers even owed to him their health and lives. Of all these, not one appears, either to utter a word in his defence, or make the slightest motion in his favor. His very apostles, his steadfast adherents, who had sworn to stand by him to the last, have shamefully fled away, and abandoned him in his greatest distress; and the memory of two of them, of one who betrayed and another who denied him, is still fresh and bleeding in his breast. But I mistake, there is one friend, one dear person, who draws near to attend and comfort him. His blessed Mother is seen moving through the crowd and approaching his cross. But who does not see that the proximity of such a person, at such a time, is itself the greatest of torments? When and where, except at this scene, was a mother ever known to attend the public execution of her own son? A friend might console; but what can the presence of a mother bring but torture? What consolation can she give, who is herself overwhelmed with affliction? The first glimpse at the cross pierces her soul with the long predicted sword, and conveys to her heart all his sufferings. It is but little to say that she is crucified in her Son; nor is it too much to add, that he is recrucified in her. Nor is he, at this moment, more able to give than she to receive comfort; he is silent, except to utter those few words, which, if they were

meant to console, are so dubious in their consolation: *Woman*, says he, glancing a look at the beloved disciple who appeared then with her: *Woman, behold thy Son.* As much as to say: Thou seest I am about to leave thee; a few moments, and thou wilt be without a Son; here is one who will supply my place. *Son, behold thy Mother.* These words close his lips to her; they are his last address, his dying salute to his blessed parent; and which is greater, their consolation or their pang? Oh! all you who weep under domestic griefs, so common and so inevitable in life, here is your model and support.

With this you may think his sufferings complete; but there is one more, internal and less visible, yet greater than all. The soul can bear up under the acutest sufferings, when heaven supports it; that is, when not deprived in her pains of that internal light and comfort, which is seldom denied to the afflicted; but, when the soul is abandoned to herself, and left alone to suffer; when, in addition to her external pains, she is covered with inward darkness, and drowned in bitterness; when her own powers are armed against her, and her whole substance, as it were, becomes a torture to itself;—then it is that she is mortally excruciated, and the sufferings of the man have reached their utmost height. On this I do not enlarge, as it can be understood by few, since few have experienced it; but the saints, who have endured this fiery trial, have declared it to be of all pains the most insupportable. And the Son of God, who was to be the universal model of suffering, would not leave his friends and favorites without their appropriate consolation under such an extremity, and therefore chose to finish with it his own protracted sorrows. But for his own intimation, we should be unacquainted with this; and, therefore, while silent of his other pains, he opens his dying lips, and makes it known to us, in words, perhaps, the most surprising and inconceivable he ever uttered: *My God*, he exclaims, *my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Remember who says this, and conceive, if you can, in his mouth, the meaning and the force of such words: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* By this feeling complaint he signifies to us, that he would endure the rest, if he did not seem to be losing hold of heaven itself; but that such is now the state of his soul, such its darkness, its anguish, its utter

dereliction, that it seems to him as if God himself had now forsaken him, and his own Eternal Father, having brought him into this sea of sorrows, had there plunged him into its utmost depth, and abandoned him to his fate.

To complete this scene of suffering, my brethren, nothing is now wanting, but the view of those humiliations which everywhere aggravate it with their dark and saddening shade.

He dies, in the first place, the most ignominious of deaths; the death of a malefactor, and of a malefactor who is a wretch and a slave! He dies in the place of infamy and horror; the abhorred scene of public execution. See the company in which he dies; between two malefactors, a thief on either hand, himself in the place of ignominious distinction between them, as their principal and their captain. One of these views him as such, sees in him nothing better than themselves, and spends his last breath in reproaching him. The soldiers, who preside at his execution, see nothing in him beyond a common criminal; whatever he may have called himself, he has been executed with the same ease, and with the same physical appearances. They, therefore, when the work is completed, sit down at their leisure under his cross, and watch him, casting on him, at intervals, their coarse and unfeeling jests. And what a circumstance is that mentioned by his Evangelist, *that they cast lots for his garments!* How deeply does it mark the meanness of his attendants, and the degradation of the sufferer! How low, how abject must he have become, who sees under his own eyes the public ministers of his execution disputing among themselves for the poor garments of which they have stript him!

See, how all ranks and conditions of men concur in his ignominy. As for the rich and the great, who are not immediately concerned in his death, they remain in Jerusalem, not to be diverted from their busy pursuits by the death of a common malefactor; they hear of his case, but contemptuously leave him to his fate,—to that death, which they easily persuade themselves must be justly his due. The laboring classes, who pass by the way, stop at the spectacle, gaze at the sufferer, pity his sufferings, but condemn his crimes; some of them, probably, as they retire, rejoicing at the success of public justice, applauding the

zeal and vigor of the Scribes and Pharisees, and thanking God for the detection of imposture!

His friends,—Martha, Mary, Lazarus, and so many others, whom he has convinced by his miracles and gained by his bounties,—where are they? Have they also a share in degrading him? They have: they pity, but are ashamed of him. They are amazed at his misfortunes and his disgraces, and still more at his silence and inaction under them. They wonder that he does not exert himself: they ask, with impatience and a degree of doubt, where is that power, of which he has given such splendid proofs? and why he does not exert it now, to extricate himself from a situation so unworthy of him? They almost mistrust their own senses, such is the weight of his disgrace, and are ready to doubt of the reality of his past wonders. And they would actually doubt, and, like the rest, give him up, but for his own secret support, which still keeps alive in them a spark of faith and reverence, one day to revive. But this, their weakness, though secret, is to him a most real and painful humiliation.

As to his enemies, it is among them, of course, that he is overwhelmed with ignominies, and, according to his own forcible expression, *satiated with reproaches.* How complete is their triumph over him! After all his escapes, he is now in their power; after all his prodigies, he is here impotent and helpless; and they have executed their pleasure on him. What a perfect picture have they made him of disgrace! marked with stripes, disfigured with spittle, stript to one ignominious covering, crowned as a mock king, and nailed to the cross as a malefactor!—as a malefactor?—nay, as a public curse!—since it is said in their own sacred books: *Cursed is he who hangs on the wood.* His credit lost, his character ruined, his name a disgrace and a shame even to his friends: his miracles an imposture, his predictions, as they imagined, falsified; his divinity a jest or a blasphemy. And to consummate the whole, as if his humiliations were not yet complete, they hear himself, in a manner, giving his sanction to them, and crying out in their presence that heaven itself has forsaken him. Oh! King of Kings, how deep are thy disgraces!

But this extraordinary personage has yet one resource. He

has said, that he is *the Way, the Truth, and the Life;*—he has declared, that he is *the Resurrection and the Life.* And he has proved it; for he has raised many to life in public and beyond question; one in particular, in the most glorious manner, but a few days ago. And cannot he do as much for himself! The single fact will scatter, in an instant, all his enemies, and break up the thick cloud of his ignominies. They challenge him to it; they offer him this condition: *Come down from the cross,* say they, *and we will believe in thee. If thou be really the Son of God, come down.* He is silent; as if he had no more power to accept the challenge or verify the condition, than any other man, he makes no reply. He allows the insinuation its full force, and even hastens to confirm it. His limbs grow pale; his eyes sink; his breath shortens; he utters his last cry;—and expires like a common mortal. No breath returns; no motion revives; he is stiff, cold, and lifeless; the spear of the soldier pierces his heart; and not a groan, a start, or a sigh; and his enemies, satisfied of his death, retire with the dispersing crowd.

Look up now, Christians, and see, whether there is any thing wanting to the full perfection of his humiliations and sufferings; and, remembering who he is, say, whether of all the titles that belong to him, you can discover the least vestige of any but the two, which I have pointed out: the Man of ignominies and the Man of sorrows. Under these two characters I have proposed him this day as your model and consolation.

And first as to his humiliations; at the sight of them, at the view of their God thus humbled and debased, many have voluntarily plunged themselves into the lowest abjection, have courted ignominy in every shape, and made themselves fools for Christ's sake. If this, which St. Paul calls the wisdom of the cross, be above your weakness, learn at least to support your own humiliations; for humiliations of one kind or other, from God, from others, or from yourselves, living in this world, you will assuredly meet. They are a part of our evils, they are among the fruits of our original disobedience, and it is vain to attempt to escape them. To be insensible to them is equally impracticable; they do not admit of being extinguished in apathy. And how, then, will you receive them? Will you rise against them and resent them, as you have perhaps often done?

Alas! this does not heal, but only aggravates their smart! Will you take refuge in human wisdom, like the sages of old, and arm yourself with its maxims, striving to spurn what you cannot avoid? Alas! this will be equally futile, and in the hour of trial your human resources will fail you. The true philosophy, here, is that of the cross; had there been any other, the Son of God would have taught it. You must bear and be silent, after the model of your Saviour; all your support must be in his divine example. The world will not believe it, and consequently is full of resentment, and contradictions and complaints; but all, who have tried, have acknowledged its efficacy, and the most humbled and disgraced of men have ever been seen under the cross the most silent, tranquil, and content. A little of its spirit would hush all our murmurs.

Secondly, as to the sufferings of your Saviour, at the sight of them, again, at the view of their God expiring in torture, thousands have run to martyrdom; many have made themselves martyrs of penance, and the saints have been heard to sigh and to pray for sufferings. If you have not courage for any thing so generous, learn at least to bear your involuntary pains. These are even more unavoidable than the other: humiliations may be sometimes eluded; but from sufferings there is no escape. How numerous and how various are they in life! Sufferings of mind and body, from friends and enemies, in prosperity and adversity, in health and in sickness. How much do we need a resource and a relief under them! The world offers us many; but how poor and how delusive are they! Our blessed Redeemer here offers us his own divine remedy. Much as he loved us, he would not deliver us from our miseries; he would only teach us how to bear them; he left us his own example; he left us his cross. Try every expedient; fly to every refuge: here alone will you find solid consolation. He offers it you; his followers recommend it by their experience and example: if you will not adopt it, you must suffer, as the world in general suffers, without comfort as without merit.

And though you could find an escape or relief from other evils, where will you find one under that, which of all evils is the greatest, as it is the last? Who shall teach you how to die, and who shall support you in death? Behold, here too

your God has made himself your model and consolation! How bitter, how terrible indeed would death be, but for his divine example! How powerless will then be all other friends and comforters! How empty, how unmeaning will every other image then appear to you, but that of your crucified Redeemer, which you shall clasp in your dying hands! And happy shall you be, if it have been your study and your refuge during life! It shall then, in death itself, be effectually your model and consolation, and transmit you, in sweet peace, to the joys of immortality.

Sermon XXVIII.

Third Sunday after Easter.

ON TIME.

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul.—1 PETER ii. 11.

IN holy writ, our present life is frequently termed a pilgrimage, and we are called strangers, who have no permanent abode here, but are journeying on towards another land, our true country, our everlasting home. St. Paul, speaking of the ancient patriarchs and prophets, says, *all these confessed themselves to be pilgrims and strangers on the earth:* and this is, to the letter, true of several among them. When Jacob was asked by Pharoah, *How many are the days of thy life? he answered, The days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years, few and evil, and they have not come up to the days of the pilgrimage of my fathers.* And David, in the height of his prosperity, when his happiness was so complete that he could hardly find words to express his gratitude, uses the same language. In the name of himself and his subjects, he exclaims: *We are sojourners before thee and strangers, as were all our fathers. Our days upon earth are as a shadow, and there is no stay.* The same idea recurs in the words of my text: *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul.* The apostle, you see, grounds his argument on the nature of our present state. Time, in fact, and eternity, are two of the most interesting subjects of human contemplation, as they are among the most powerful springs of moral impulse. They comprise all that concerns man; within their precincts is contained all that he has to hope and to

fear, to expect and to desire. Time is the limited, but interesting scene of his action and probation; eternity, the grand and boundless sphere of his rest and fruition. Grand, however, and transcendent as the latter is, being remote to man's eye at least, we may the less wonder that we frequently lose sight of it; but we have no such palliation for our general inattention to the former. For time is near to us. It mingles insensibly with all our words and actions; our language is full of its terms. We cannot indite the most simple deed of civil life, or transmit the most familiar account of ourselves, without bringing the subject under our eye. All nature speaks to us of time; we are surrounded by its indexes and its monitors, and their warning notes are continually sounding it in our ears. The running streams, the gliding heavens, the revolving seasons, even the familiar and domestic instruments by which we count our hours and regulate our movements, what are they, but so many lectures on time? fingers that point at it, or tongues that speak of it? Yet, in the midst of all this, we are heedless and unreflecting; there is no subject of such vital and immediate interest to us, on which our thoughts are more superficial and volatile.

From this preamble, it is evidently my design to bring up the neglected subject this day before you, and to present it, seriously and steadily, to your contemplation. After briefly considering what time is, and examining its nature as connected with us, I will collect and bring forward, under a series of epithets, all that appears to me most interesting to be said concerning it.

TIME, among human words and ideas, is one of the most frequent and familiar; yet it has that in common with other familiar things, that while practically easy, it is technically difficult; it is easily conceived in thought, but with difficulty couched in expression. Hence the well-known saying of St. Augustin: *If you ask me what time is, I know not: If you ask me not, I know.* Notwithstanding this, I think we may venture to approach the subject, and, by steady consideration, hope to bring it within our apprehension: and this, I trust, will not be without its use for our future reflections.

Time, or duration, well examined, will be found to be the essential concomitant of being; in fact, it is nothing more than

existence continuing to exist: take away all being, and the idea of duration vanishes with it, while it is impossible to conceive duration without something that endures. When this duration is considered as without being or end, that is, when it is applied to the existence of an ever-existing God, it is what we call eternity; for without an eternal God, we should never have known or conceived eternity: when it is applied to a being that has had a beginning and will have an end, it is what we call TIME; in this sense it imports, if I may so express myself, that intercepted portion of eternal duration which is coexistent with the being in question.

In this view, time, in its first and most obvious application, will belong to the sum of created things, or better, to this material world which we inhabit, and will mean nothing more than this same world existing for a certain as yet undefined portion of duration. An example of the term in this its widest use, is that sublime passage of the Apocalypse, where the angel, at the last day, lifting up his hand to heaven, swears by *Him who liveth for ever and ever, that time shall be no more.* But the most interesting sense of the word TIME, and by far the most important to us, is that wherein it is put for our own life, for that portion of duration which is commensurate with the existence of each human individual. In this sense it is used by the apostle where he says, *Time is short;* and it is in this that I speak through the following discourse.

So much for the meaning of the term. What I have said will lead us to a satisfactory idea of the real nature of time as connected with us. Being but an appendage, as it were, of our existence, it is, of course, like that existence, borrowed and dependent; it is, in fact, not in our hands, but in the hands of God, who distributes the invisible line at his pleasure, here abbreviates and there prolongs it, lets it run to its full and leisure length in some, and in others cuts it abruptly short. As, however, there is nothing which we think so much our own, nothing to which we so frequently and so familiarly apply the epithet of possession as time, let us see by what tenure we can be said to hold it, and how far it is really ours.

Part of what we call our time is past: is this ours? No more than if it had never been. We have no claim upon it, no power

over it; it is irrecoverably gone, and all that we can say of it is that it once was ours. Is the future ours? We are still more accustomed to call it so, and even to think it so; nay, we dispose of it, we parcel it out, we promise it, and transfer it to others. But, in doing so, we evidently deal in what is not ours, we draw upon a fund which does not belong to us. Future time may be ours; but that is all we can say. Even that which is in immediate proximity, that which is just to come, is utterly beyond our control. Who dare promise himself that which we call to-morrow? who will even engage for the next hour? No one here present can do it; to each of us the next hour, yet future, may never be present. What time, then, is our own? for some time we certainly have. The present: but, observe, only the present moment. The time which we possess consists in one indivisible point, which is passing in the very instant of possession; scarcely have you seized it than it has slipped from you into the past, and that which was then future has usurped its place. But a minute ago we were descanting on past time; the time we spent upon it is now of the same order; it is past likewise; it has gone with the former, and both are now as much beyond our reach as the years before the deluge. In like manner, the present moment, which we now have, while I am now speaking is going;—observe it,—seize it, if you can,—arrest its flight. It is gone, irretrievably gone; it has slipped away: it has flown behind you, and no force can draw it back; the arm of Omnipotence itself even cannot drag it up again from the deep gulph down which it has so precipitately rushed. Such is time, such its nature, and such the tenure by which we hold it. I proceed now to consider it under a series of epithets, comprising, I believe, all that is most interesting on the subject.

In the first place, time is *irresistible in its course.* Time presents us with a view of what man has in vain attempted to realize in his own perpetual motion. Time is always moving, ever advancing; the very idea is essential to it. We can no more conceive time without motion than we can compute motion without time: either in their own nature, or in the present constitution of things, they are inseparably united. All other motion in nature tends of itself to rest, and, gradually spending its force, sooner or later invariably terminates in rest: but this is

uniform, perseverant, and invincible. Over almost every other motion in nature man exercises a control; but here he stands abashed, without power and without hope. The very idea of stopping time is too absurd for his ambition; he would as soon think of attempting, with his feeble hand, to arrest the exploded ball in its rapid flight, or to push back with his puny arm the great machinery of the skies. The latter attempt, indeed, would be identical; for what are the heavenly bodies but the regulators and distributors of time? We learn from Scripture itself that this was one great object of their creation: and the force, the irresistible though silent impulse with which they urge their way through the pathless void, is in fact the force and impulse of time. Hopeless, therefore, of any sway of this kind over time, man passively resigns himself to its impetuosity: early and well acquainted with the nature and force of the stream down which he is gliding, instead of stemming it he confines all his cares too often to the unhappy purpose of concealing its progress from his eye.

Intimately connected with this condition of time is the epithet next to be considered: *it is most rapid in its flight.* The sacred writings are full of energetic images on this point. The life of man is compared, at one time, to the smoke which gathers in the air, and is immediately scattered by the wind; at another, it is likened to the wind itself which blows over the surface of the earth. But its most general assimilation among the sacred writers, and indeed its most exact resemblance, is to the moving shadow, not more from the unsubstantialness of its nature, than from the velocity with which it is seen to flit by us over the bosom of the earth. *Our time*, says the Wise Man, *is the passage of a shadow. Man's days*, says the royal prophet, *pass like a shadow. Our days on the earth are a shadow*, says Job. This holy man was a competent judge on the subject: he had attained the patriarchal age of two hundred and forty years; yet he exclaims: *My days have been swifter than a runner: they have passed by as ships carrying fruits, as an eagle flying to his prey.* We have other testimonies: hear how the wicked, too late undeceived, express their astonishment in accumulated images. *All these things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on: and as a ship that*

cleaveth the waves; or as when a bird flieth through the air; or as when an arrow is shot at a mark. Man, it is true, ever inconsistent, but nowhere more so than in his language and conduct respecting time, sometimes complains that time is tardy and life lingering; but if he does, in some particular circumstances and feelings, utter the thoughtless complaint, he takes care to redeem it by abundant confessions of another kind. Instead of calling in any more the testimony of others on the subject, I will here appeal directly to yourselves, who have doubtless in your time been among the number of complainers. How often have you remarked aloud that time flies fast: it is one of your commonest expressions. How often have you started in amazement at the sudden remembrance of some past event which you seemed only just to have left behind you; and did not time's infallible record depose against you, you would be almost ready to call in question the reality of the interval. You are, at this moment, in a condition to pronounce freely and deliberately on the subject. You have had ample experience of the passage of time; that is to say, you have passed, perhaps, the greater part of your own time. Judge, then, now, as you look back in spirit over it, and say what you think of your progress. Has it been slow? has life loitered? Alas! I hear you acknowledge with a sigh that you are but of yesterday; that the strongest figures of holy writ are merely just; and that neither the arrow's flight, nor the eagle's wing, nor even the lightning's glance, are hyperboles in the comparison of time. Flatter not yourselves, my brethren, that the years to come will be otherwise; they are of the same nature, though different in positions, and, however remote along the line, are of the same thread: when you shall have reached its last extremity, you will still look back with the same feelings, nor will even the years that shall then have been added to your course appear to have diminished any thing of its velocity.

Irresistible, however, and rapid as time is, man might still waste it with impunity, if its measure were indefinite: but its next important condition is, that it *is limited in extent. Short are the days of man*, says Job; *thou hast fixed his limits, which cannot be passed over.* These limits, it is well known, were once far wider than they are now; and if, in those ancient records, we

hear one, whose life still partook of patriarchal longevity, exclaim, *The days of my pilgrimage are few and evil*, what shall we say to our own contracted and insignificant span? *The days of man*, says David, *are seventy years*. And, if from these we take the unconscious years of infancy; if we deduct another third, for the hours spent in inactive and unmeriting sleep; and then subtract, besides, all the little items that are lost through life; to what a poor and pitiful compass shall we find ourselves reduced!

Short and contracted as this time is, it is incessantly contracting more. Every breath we draw takes from it; we have less to live now than we had an hour ago; in another hour, life will be shorter still. How many are there here present, whose allotted duration is already alarmingly diminished! While they are unobserving, it has, perhaps, past its better half, or is even shrinking fast to its momentous close. And how dead to their own interests must those be, how insensible, how infatuated, who live as if their days were unlimited, as if they had taken out a lease perpetual of life, or could put off at leisure the payment of nature's debt.

From this reproach there would still be an escape, if this time, limited as it is, were yet fixed in its termination; but its next formidable condition is, that it is, to us at least, *uncertain in its close*. It may attain its extremity; but it may be arrested midway, or in any stage, even in its immature commencement. It may, nay, it most frequently is: the disproportion here is vastly against the hopes and flatteries of man. For one or two, whom we see growing out their full period, and whom we look and point at as the rarities of their kind, how many do we see scattered in untimely profusion along the road of life, nipt in the infant bud, blasted in youthful bloom, or cut down in manly maturity!

From this quality of time, I pass more quickly to another, which I consider the most interesting and affecting of all. *Time is inestimable in its value*. Wisdom, the highest ornament of a rational being, consists in giving to every thing its due value. Let us, then, endeavor for once to make a just estimate of time; for, though I have just called it inestimable, we may still, with

advantage, attempt its estimate, just as we sometimes try to measure eternity, though we know it to be immeasurable.

In the first place, I do not hesitate to pronounce time more valuable than all the riches of the world, than all its kingdoms, than the whole earth itself. For, on the one hand, with time, we can purchase that, which far outweighs all the treasures of the world. By one act of virtue performed in a short moment, by one prayer, by one deed of charity, one self-denial, we obtain a crown of glory in heaven, something unseen, indeed, but, unquestionably, of more worth than all this earth contains. And now, on the other hand, reverse the experiment, and see, with what weight of worldly possessions you can purchase a small portion of time. Accumulate all the power of the mighty, all the dignities of the great, all the riches of the wealthy;—will this suffice? Their highest amount is not adequate to purchase a single moment. If you have not had occasion to make the trial, there are those who have. How often has the opulent sinner, in his last moments, wished for a little time, and, with all his wealth, found himself too poor to purchase it! How often has the potent monarch, from his dying bed, surveyed his splendid apartments, and thought of his vast possessions, and in mind and heart offered to sacrifice them all for a little reprieve, and has felt, bitterly felt, that the offer was nugatory! No, the treasures of this world may purchase the things of this world, things like themselves, transitory and finite; but they cannot procure what is, in some sense, infinite in its worth.

Yes! I say, that time has an infinite value. This must be true, if the value of a thing is the value of that which it purchases. Now, time purchases that which, if not universally infinite, is literally so in one sense; infinite in duration. Each single good work, done in time, earns for us an eternal treasure! In this sense it has been said, that, in this life, every moment of time is worth an eternity. My brethren, has this been your estimation of time? Have you been aware of the riches which you have had in your hands? Let no one complain of poverty: he that has time, if he has faith, is immensely rich, and may justly despise all the treasures of the world. We, my brethren, make small account of the value of time; we seem as if we had lost its due estimation. Would you know who those are that

appreciate it justly? Those who have lost it. Ask the reprobate in hell, and they will give you its true value. Ask one of them what he would give for a small portion of it, for one of those hours which we possess in such abundance, and which we let slip through our hands, so thoughtlessly and so unprofitably. Would he be willing, think you, to endure for it all that has ever been felt of torture in this world? He would think the condition light and easy. Doubtless he would consent to suffer, in his own person, all those torments, of which he has so dreadful an experience, multiplied as many times as he has companions in wo, and that for any period short of eternity, for one moment of expiating time! I need not say, that the hard bargain can never be made.

For, in the last place, Time is *irretrievable in its loss*. This is the last of its epithets, and completes its deep and formidable interest. However great the value of Time, if it could only be recovered, it might be lost with impunity; but it is absolutely and eternally irrecoverable. Health may be restored; reputation may be repaired; riches may be regained; lost empires may be won again: there is no possession, perhaps, in this world of vicissitudes that may not, by some means or by some chance, be retrieved: time alone, once lost, never is and never can be recovered. You may repent of it, you may weep for it; but even the tears, which blot out the fault, cannot conceal the loss. You may resolve for the future, but you cannot repair the past; and that resolution is, perhaps, the only consolation that is left you.

I know not any sentiment more keenly painful to a reflecting and sensible mind. If heaven could admit of grief, this is one and the only one, the entrance of which we could conceive natural or possible. Those happy spirits now know the value of time; they feel, on the one hand, and appreciate their own happiness: they know, on the other, that that happiness was to be purchased in time, and that time they remember to have sometimes lost. They intensely desire to love God more and more; by a more careful use of time they might once have attained it; and now they cannot. Their present ardor and love, however great, however intense, cannot merit an increase, or exalt their allotted glory. Is it possible they should not

feel regret? We might easily, and certainly should fall into the mistake, were not our knowledge of heaven supernatural and revealed.

That grief, however, of which they are incapable in the land of bliss, they felt and indulged here on earth. Yes, this was often the secret spring of their tears. When they began to know God, they found, like St. Augustine, and lamented that they knew him too late; they reflected that there was once a time, when they might have loved him better, when, by employing earnestly the time which they had in hand, they might have attained to a much higher degree of what they then felt to be their only happiness; and then it was too late; those years were gone for ever, and nothing could restore them. Ah! here it was, that their impassioned hearts rose in all their sensibility, and sent forth, at each recollection, a new gush of sorrow from their eyes; and their only consolation was to throw themselves with all their ardor on the future, and endeavor in some measure to redeem the time which they had unfortunately lost, by filling up every moment, by seizing every opportunity, by mortifying themselves, by dying to every passion, by practising every virtue, and seizing every good work within their reach; thus striving at least to crowd thick into the future those merits which ought to have occupied the past.

This, my brethren, which was their holy and salutary consolation, must be ours also, and the conclusion of this discourse. This time, which, we have seen, is so irresistible, so rapid, so limited, so precarious, so inestimable, and yet so irretrievable,—we also have lost. We once had it in abundance; and who can reflect, without a keen regret, that, if he had employed it well, he might, at this moment, be in possession of all the happiness of the saints, of their sweet tranquillity, of their holy joy, of their ecstatic love of God? That opportunity is now gone for ever: however, another still remains; thank God, you have yet time, probable time at least, in which to labor and to merit. You that are here present, more fortunate or rather more favored than hundreds of your acquaintances, some of whom you will miss in this accustomed auditory, you have escaped the arrows of disease and death, which have lately been falling so thickly around you. The secret hand, which directed them to their

several destinies, has kept them off from you, and left you still in your place in this world, to labor in the great affair of your soul. They can no longer do it, and if they neglected it, the neglect is now without remedy. You can still do it, and, even if you have hitherto been negligent, can yet repair the neglect.

Oh! my friends, let us be wise in future: let us employ well our precious time, in doing good works, in shunning sin and working out our salvation. Let us watch and seize every moment as it flies, and carefully husband it, aware that it can be no security for its successor. Let us hail every new day with avidity, and earnestly fill up all its hours, ever remembering, as we see its evening shades fall around us, that *the night is coming on, in which no man can work.* It is a great rule for virtue and a good life to consider every day as the last; yes, how well would that man live, who should ever confine his views and expectations of the future to the day that was passing over his head! Many have admired this rule; many have adopted it in theory; but how few have long adhered to it in practice! The example of the saints, however, shows that in itself it is practicable. Make it then, your rule; every day, consider that day as your last. There are many suppositions which you make, and even act upon in life, that are not so likely nor so well founded. Some days, you will find your supposition unverified; but that will not diminish its future justness or probability; it will only add to and thicken its chances; and there will certainly come a day, when it will be finally realized. Thus will your allotted portion of time, whatever it be, be well passed and meritoriously filled; thus will you be able, at every period and station of it, to look on the retrospect with satisfaction, and on the prospect with hope and comfort; and, at the appointed hour, to make your transition easily and joyfully to that other great scene, to which time is but the foreground and the introduction,—eternity!

Sermon XXIX.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

ON MORTAL SIN.

And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment.—JOHN xvi. 8.

THAT the world is often wrong in its estimate of good and evil, is a truth, which on every side fails not to strike the reflecting mind. If we listen to the conversation of men, we shall find that their solicitudes and their sorrows are almost exclusively confined to evils of a temporal nature. The loss of friends, of reputation, of riches, or of health, and the other real or imaginary distresses which attend our present state, form the endless topics of their murmurs. As for evils of a spiritual kind, the loss of God and of his grace, the disease and death of the soul by sin, and the eternal pains which await sin, these seldom, if ever, excite their apprehensions or their grief. Were this error unattended with any fatal consequence, it might not be necessary to combat it. But, alas! from underrating the evil, men rush to its commission without fear, and, when they have committed it, feel no remorse. Indeed, mournful as is the scene, which Christianity exhibits, great as are the crimes and disorders prevalent in every rank, what other cause shall we assign, but the ignorance and insensibility under which men are found with regard to the heinousness of sin: if they duly appreciated the calamity, their falls would assuredly be less frequent, and their reparation more arduous and sincere. *With desolation is all the world made desolate*, says the prophet, *because there is none that thinketh in the heart.* Hence it is my duty to endeavor to rectify this fatal error, by showing, that of all the evils, which

can possibly occur, mortal sin is the greatest, and, at the same time, the least easily repaired. This subject, then, my brethren, I will this day propose for your consideration. The importance of it is its best apology. There is no one here present, whose vital interests it does not involve. The guilty are concerned in it, that, from the view of the heinousness of mortal sin, they may learn what ought to be their atonement: the innocent, that, from the same consideration, they may continue to shun so pernicious an evil.

The idea which, from our early youth, we have been taught to form of mortal sin is, that it is a grievous offence against any of the known commandments of God, of his Church, or of any lawful superior. Every just law, whether of God or man, conveys to those whom it binds an announcement of the will of heaven. *There is no power but from God*, says St. Paul, *and he that resisteth power, resisteth the ordinance of God.* From this fundamental truth, it follows that every mortal sin whatever includes a rebellion of the creature against the Creator, a rebellion of man against his God; that is to say, by mortal sin the order of God is interrupted, his will contemned, his power denied, his justice dared, his goodness abused. He alone has entire dominion over all creatures. He created them, and created them for himself. In requiring obedience to his laws, he claims nothing but what belongs to him by the most indisputable of titles. This claim is recognised by the whole of nature. True to the laws which were imposed by him who called it into existence, the universe, in all its parts, conspires in rendering him the homage of its obedience. The vast orbs which roll through the firmament fulfil, without the slightest variation, their destined courses. The sun which has disappeared in the west returns invariably at the expected moment. The seasons succeed each other in unfailing regularity. Through the universal system, all is obedience, order, harmony, subjection. *By thy ordinance the day goeth on*, says holy David; *for all things serve thee.* Amid this general concert of the creation, only one dissentient voice is heard. It is that of the wilful sinner! Yes, on this earth, which itself is but an atom of creation, there exists a being who, in his impious frenzy, dares to challenge the right which the Creator possesses to his homage;

who exalts his impious voice, and declares, *I will not obey.* Declares, did I say? nay, confirms by his actions the daring avowal, erects his own will, the black passions of his own heart, into so many divinities, and, falling down before them, says: "These shall be my gods; these will I worship; these will I obey. These shall sit in the throne of the Most High. The faculties which he has given me I will employ against him. His sacred decrees I will trample under foot. Heaven and earth may conspire to pay him homage: I will join with the spirits of hell in rejecting his dispensations." Such, my brethren, is the blasphemous language which every sinner tacitly makes use of against his God when he infringes his law by mortal sin. These horrible sentiments, in all their black detail, are not, it is true, actually present to his imagination; for it is an artifice of the tempter to hide from his view the enormity of the deed which he is about to perpetrate. The outrage, however, is in fact committed: it is inseparable from the sinful act.

But who is the sinner? Stand forth, wretched man, and tell us who thou art, that in accents of impious discord thou darest to insult the majesty of Heaven? Thou art the creature of his hands. He beheld thee before thou wert formed in the womb. A moment ago, thou wert not; another instant, thou wilt cease to be: a single wish of his omnipotence, and even now thou wert crushed in thy impiety. The meanest insect which thou tramplest under foot is greater in thy eye than thou art in his. Ah! my brethren, if an insult offered to an earthly potentate is great, because great is the distance between the offending party and the dignity of the person offended, what ideas should we not form of mortal sin, an insult which impotent man, a worm of the earth, an insect of a day, offers to God, the Creator, the Immutable, the Eternal, the Omnipotent! Language can supply no term, the whole range of created nature can present no image, which conveys to the imagination an idea of horror adequate to the deed. None but the seraph-tongued inhabitants of heaven, none but those who are admitted to behold the Most High unveiled, unobscured in the full splendor of his eternity, can tell us the enormity of the action that mortally offends him. And what has the sinner gained by his revolt? A momentary gratification, a pleasure followed by immediate disgust:

the favor, perhaps, of some petty mortal, or a trifling increase of temporal riches! For such objects does the wretch wage war upon his Creator, spurn his laws, and provoke his justice?

But, though to offend a God, whose power is infinite, and who, by the title of Creator, has the strictest right to the obedience of all his creatures, includes an outrage of the blackest dye; yet would sin be less consummate in its malice if his goodness were not equal to his power. Yes, Christians, the God who is outraged by mortal sin is as good as he is great. All that the sinner has, all that he is, is the free gift of the bounty of him whom he offends. His existence! This God it was who called him from nothing, when his place was not to be found; when it was not known that he should ever be, he bade him assume a station among those whom he has honored with his love. His body! This same God has gifted him with a frame constructed with infinite art, and displaying, in all its operations, the most astonishing proofs of the goodness of its author. His soul! With what surprising powers, with what exalted faculties has he not adorned it! He has created it to his own image. He has stamped it with immortality, and destined it for happiness as eternal as himself. His preservation! At the very moment that the sinner is loading him with indignities, God, with paternal care, is watching over and protecting the sinner, supplying his wants, preserving him from dangers, loading him with all kinds of blessings. Speak we of the gifts of grace? How astonishing is the detail of his goodness! *Come and see, and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul.* Having created and destined the sinner for the eternal enjoyment of himself, he has spared nothing to fit him for heaven. Graces, sacraments, inspirations, examples, calls of conscience, not a moment in the life of the sinner without a corresponding favor: to crown all, as if else were insufficient to testify the love of this great and good God for sinful man, he has, by a last exertion of omnipotence, given himself a victim for him; he has clothed himself with his infirmities, he has atoned for his sins. Yes! he, at whose presence the highest seraph of heaven trembles with awe, bleeds for the sinner upon Calvary: for him he weeps, for him he is scourged, for him he dies. Ah! my brethren, the most sensible of all injuries, the keenest of all

pangs is that which is inflicted by the sting of ingratitude. This same favored man, this object of immeasurable love, this child redeemed at no less a price than the death of the best of Fathers, by mortal sin, rebels against him, insults his love, employs against him the gifts of his bounty, joins with his enemies, deforms his image, and, by a matchless depravity, tramples under foot the blood that has redeemed him. Were human friendship repaid by such conduct, who would not stigmatize and abhor the foul ingratitude? And shall our abhorrence be less, now that the outrage is committed, not against a feeble creature, but against God, in comparison of whose love for us all earthly tenderness is unworthy to be named? Such, then, is the malice, such the ingratitude of mortal sin.

And can it be, that he, whose justice is as infinite as his power, should not, in the day of his vengeance, visit so great an evil with the most terrible of punishments? Undoubtedly he will. And, to form a due horror of mortal sin, we must now alter the picture: we have hitherto beheld it only as it is an outrage against the majesty and against the goodness of God; we will proceed to consider it, as it is the object of his hatred and of his avenging justice. Place, then, before your eyes, all the evils of which the history of the world presents but an uninterrupted tissue; call before you all the misfortunes, all the scourges, all the calamities, which compose the long list of human woes. Infancy making its voice first heard in lamentation, manhood eating his bread in the sweat of his brow, old age feebly dragging his decayed frame, famine, earthquakes, pestilences, inundations, the rage of the elements, the fury of human passions, the pangs of disease, the stroke of death, which sooner or later must consummate all our other woes; and say, what other title is inscribed on the dismal catalogue, if it be not this: *The punishment of sin.* Yes, my brethren, the same instant, which beheld man first mortally offend his God, beheld him condemned to infinite and interminable evils: that instant a God of love, a God of goodness, became a God of vengeance, a God of wrath. To punish one mortal sin, not only he, the guilty perpetrator, but all his posterity, was made to drink of the cup of the divine indignation. One mortal offence was committed, and the whole universe was convulsed; the creatures, which were made for

man's happiness, became the instruments of his punishments; the earth, the theatre of his guilt, was cursed, nor could all the sufferings of the myriads that were to live, or rather pine upon its surface, make atonement to the justice of an irritated God.

Thus, my brethren, do all the miseries, which we behold so thick around us, and under which we so often suffer, attest the hatred which God bears to mortal sin. If we beheld them, in a proper point of view, if we made a right use of our calamities, instead of vainly repining under them, we should regard every misfortune of life as a fresh proof of the enormity of our guilt, as a fresh instance of the hatred with which it is pursued by God, and as a fresh incentive to shun and abhor every transgression.

After this view of the general effects of mortal sin on all mankind, shall I descend to particular instances? Shall I call your attention to those terrifying catastrophes, the accounts of which are so thickly scattered through the history of the human race? to the whole world overwhelmed with its inhabitants by the waters of the deluge? to cities and towns consumed by a visible judgment from heaven? to the fury of that last fire, which, before the general judgment, shall, with devastating rage, scour the whole earth, and sweep from its surface all the labors of man, all the monuments of human art, of human opulence, and pride? No, my brethren, while, to our limited reason, each of these scenes presents an awful picture, not only they, but, as I have already said, the united sufferings of the whole human race, are inadequate to the atonement of a single crime.

Let us, then, to aid our conceptions, take a view of mortal sin in its proper abode,—there, where, to borrow the expression of the sacred text, all the sinners of the earth are made to drink to the dregs of the wine of God's wrath. Open, then, the gates of the bottomless abyss, and read, by the light of its dismal flames, the catalogue of the woes with which an implacable God there loads the unhappy inmates. *The worm that dieth not, the fire that is not extinguished, weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth; fury, rage, despair, and blasphemy; spirits created for vengeance; darkness and eternal horror; neither have they rest, day nor night: the smoke of their torments ascends up for ever and ever.*

Yes! at this very moment, there exists a damned soul actually enduring, in all these complicated horrors, the punishment of mortal sin. That soul, perchance, may be one in whose friendship and familiarity you once lived. That mortal sin, which for ever racks his conscience with unutterable anguish, may be one in which you shared, one to which your words, your actions, your example may have induced him. Ah! sinners, could he but return to tell you what mortal sin is, to tell you what awaits it, to tell you how to lament it; could he do so!

But who are the princes, the rulers of this land of darkness, who these ministers of wrath, these spirits of vengeance, that *in their fury lay on grievous torments?* They are the once favored angels of heaven; before their fall they shone bright amid the celestial choirs. What are they now? Behold them, hideous, loathsome, breathing blasphemies, torn and infuriated by passions never to be gratified, consumed by torments, under which they are never to expire. Mortal sin, my brethren, has wrought the change, mortal sin, not executed in work, not expressed in word, but only consented to in thought, has transformed them from angels of light into spirits of darkness, from messengers of love into ministers of wrath, from citizens of heaven into spectres of hell. But shall not all the torments which they incessantly endure at length expiate the guilt? It shall never be forgiven. It was but a thought; and he who punishes them is a God of goodness. But the thought was a mortal sin; and it shall never be forgiven; as long as it is true that it has been committed, so long shall its punishments endure.

Christians, the word of God has described in the most awful terms the severity of the wrath to come, that, by viewing the severity of the punishmeht, we may become sensible of the enormity of the deed, and may learn to shun in time, what eternal torments can never expiate. But there is still left for our contemplation one scene more expressive of God's indignation against this worst of evils, than the united horrors of the bottomless abyss. That scene, my brethren, lies on Calvary! Yes, a God by an inconceivable prodigy become man, a God clothed with infirmity, a God subject to his own creatures, a God sorrowful unto death, a God reviled, mocked, and scourged, a God crowned with thorns, bruised and bleeding, a God expir-

ing on a cross, and all in punishment of human guilt,—behold, my brethren, a spectacle more descriptive of the horror with which sin is beheld by the Eternal Mind, than all the torments, which it is in the power of God himself to inflict on men and angels, for all eternity. Sinners, would you know what mortal sin is? Read it in the wounds of your dying Redeemer. Would you weep for it? Learn in his anguish what should be the abundance of your tears. Would you do penance for it? Judge from his sufferings what ought to be the greatness of your efforts. Would you abhor it? Let the justice of a God of mercy, exacting the last drop of the blood of his only Son as the price of its forgiveness be the measure of your detestation.

From mortal sin as it regards God, let us proceed to consider it as it regards the sinner himself. And here, my brethren, what a spectacle of horror is this, which once more rushes upon our view, the spectacle of a soul in mortal sin! Before the unhappy hour of its fall, as long as it was enrobed in innocence, it shone the fairest of the sublunary works of God. Beloved and cherished by him, whose noblest image it was, it shared the choicest treasures of his celestial grace. Protected from above, it walked through the midst of the shadow of death, without harm or danger. Mistress of its passions, it was able to check at will all their importunities, and to bid defiance to all their rebellious efforts. Heaven was its own. By the tranquillity of a good conscience, it already tasted in anticipation the joys to come; every victory which it gained over the world, the flesh, and the devil, every act of self-denial, every little conquest over self-love, was a new gem added to its eternal crown. Hell saw, and was stung with envy. Heaven rejoiced at the glorious spectacle; celestial spirits hailed its triumphant progress, and prepared to inscribe its name for the pillars of Sion. Behold it, after the commission of mortal sin. The most beauteous object of the love of the Most High is changed into an object of his indignation and abhorrence. The dwelling-place of God is become the habitation of demons. A slave to passions, which it once commanded, it finds itself in a moment destitute, powerless, and degraded, in the midst of a thousand foes. Extinguished are all its virtues, all its merits. Its peace is gone. Gone is its love of God, its relish for prayer, its sense of the divine judg-

ments. Heaven is lost; the consolations of hope are no more. With the friendship of God, it has forfeited all the benefits of redemption. The blood of Jesus Christ, which it has made void, cries to heaven against it; his wounds and his sufferings, which were designed to save it, have become the occasion of its heaviest reprobation. The angels of heaven, the once faithful guardians of its ways, fly from it with abhorrence. The spirits of darkness triumph and mock at its fall. Hell is open to receive it; the next moment may bury it for ever in its fathomless abyss. Here, my brethren, let us pause, and with these impressions of the enormity of mortal sin, let us now turn to ourselves, and endeavor to bring home the application of the awful truths which we have been considering.

If, then, there be in this assembly any one, who has reason to apprehend, that he has, at any period of his life, exemplified in his own breast the horrid picture which has just been exhibited; let that individual accompany me in a few reflections with which I mean to close the subject.

It is then true, let him say to himself, that I once offended God by mortal sin. At that unhappy hour, had his almighty justice cut me off in my transgression, I should be even now lamenting the deed in hell's relentless flames. When I consented to sin, I knew that the Son of God had died for me; I also knew, that by that action I should abuse, and nullify in my regard his sufferings and death; nay, that, by consenting to so great an evil, I should add a new pang to that weight of sorrows which he endured for my sake. I knew, moreover, that, when in baptism he adopted me as his child, and gave me a share in his eternal inheritance, I on my part promised eternal fidelity. I also knew, reason itself told me, that the object, for which I was going to give myself up to eternal torments, was one which would afford me no real satisfaction; on the contrary, that it would bring with it incalculable evils. All this I knew. Yet I persisted. I exchanged eternity for time,—God for Satan,—heaven for hell. I committed mortal sin. That moment, like all the others of my life, was instantly registered in the book of heaven, and I stood forth an outcast among the works of God, a victim doomed to eternal perdition. Such, indisputably, was then my situation; but is it altered now? An

answer in the affirmative is more than any man on earth can give. I know, then, that I was once, by my own fault, the enemy of God. I know not whether he has ever pardoned me. I know I once deserved his hatred; I know not whether I am now in possession of his love. I know I was once in mortal sin; I know not whether I have ever truly repented. As long as I exist upon earth, all that I can know is, that if at my departure I shall not have appeased the God whom I have offended, hell will inevitably be my inheritance. With this certainty of what I once was, this ignorance of what I am now, what are my exertions to secure that pardon, which is to me of the last importance? The Church, in the days of primitive fervor, enjoined penalties of the most arduous nature for a single mortal sin; penalties which often ceased only with the life of the offender; and, knowing, as I do, that the justice of God is still the same, and that mortal sin is still as enormous as it then was, shall I think I have done enough by having snatched a few moments from the world, and given them, amid a multitude of distractions, to some devotional exercise? Thousands of holy penitents, in punishment of a less guilt than mine, have buried themselves in frightful deserts, where, emaciated with austerities, they spent their days in labor and their nights in watchings: and shall it be sufficient for me to suffer no inconvenience, but that which cannot be refused without incurring fresh guilt? To punish mortal sin, God has decreed the eternal torments of hell; to expiate the same guilt, the Son of God has suffered, from his own creatures, torments, ignominy, and death; and shall I calmly repose, and think I have done sufficient, when I have made a few verbal acts of sorrow? Can I, after so great a guilt, and so little atonement, believe, that the way to heaven is narrow and difficult, and yet with any reason pretend to be among the happy few who walk therein? Can I rationally think, that a repentance like this is calculated to give joy to the angels of heaven?

My dear friends, I mean not by these reflections to cause any one to despair of the divine mercy. God grant, that far other may be the fruit of this discourse. All that I mean to say is, that the idea usually formed, with regard to the heinousness of mortal sin, is erroneous, and that the manner of doing

penance for it should be very different from what the world generally apprehends.

I mean not to say, that God, who is an indulgent Father, will not receive the sinner, at whatever hour he calls upon him; but this I will say, that a spiritual resurrection from the death of sin to the life of grace is not to be effected, but by fervent supplications, sincere sorrow, and arduous works of penance. I mean not to judge any man; but I hazard the assertion, that, when the secrets of consciences shall be laid open, we shall find, that, out of those who have committed mortal sin, the number of false penitents infinitely exceeds that of the true.

If, therefore, my dear friends, there be among you one whose conscience can recall the fatal moment, when he consented to any mortal offence, let him, to his latest breath, ever view that moment with horror. Let him say of that day, *Let it be turned into darkness, let not God regard it from above; let mist overspread it, and let it be wrapped up in bitterness. Let it not be counted in the days of the year, nor numbered in the months.* If such there be, let that man consume his nights and his days in bewailing his calamity. Let him consider himself an outcast in the creation; and let him not presume to murmur, if all mankind should spurn him, if all the creatures of God should conspire against him, to avenge the injury which he has offered to his and their Creator.

And as for you, faithful souls, you whom a particular Providence has hitherto preserved from this most dreadful of deaths, let your hearts expand in acts of gratitude and love to your preserver. Presume not upon your own strength, but listen with trembling to the words of the apostle: *Let him that stands take heed lest he fall.* Let the sight of the dreadful precipice, down which so many are dashed, effectually deter you from ever approaching its confines.

That those who have never mortally sinned may continue to shun so great an evil, and that those who have fallen may again rise by sincere repentance, is a blessing, &c.

Sermon XXX.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

OPPORTUNITIES OF IMPROVEMENT.

Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee: and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee. Speak to the earth, and it shall answer thee: and the fishes of the sea shall tell.—Job xii. 7. 8.

Every scene in nature, the most ordinary occurrence of life, presents to the well-taught and reflecting mind some lesson of wisdom. In whatever direction we turn our eyes, the page of instruction lies open before us. *Every creature*, says the author of the Imitation of Christ, *should be to thee a looking-glass of life, and a book of holy doctrine.* And, among the innumerable claims which the great Creator has upon our gratitude, though perhaps the most neglected, it is not the weakest, that he has thus environed us with mementos of our destination, has made material objects subservient not only to our corporal, but likewise to our spiritual welfare, and has rendered it almost impossible for man to live thoughtless of his God, of whom all beings proclaim the existence and the perfections, or neglectful of religious duties, while every thing, in some degree, contributes to confirm his faith, enliven his hope, or inflame his charity.

To illustrate what I have advanced, rather by variety of instances than by dint of reasoning, let me invite you to view creation, when the genial return of spring has awakened its dormant energies. The verdure of the meadows enamelled with flowers of every hue, the deeper green of the corn fields, the luxuriant foliage of the woods, the variegated blossoms of the fruit trees,—each doubles the charms of the rest. From every bough the feathered tribes pour their delighted souls in melody.

The flocks and herds, spread over the pastures, are feasting on the bounties of the season. Every thing, animate and inanimate, feels the benign influence. Universal nature smiles. How admirably calculated is a prospect of this kind to excite the warmest feelings of gratitude in the breast of the man who beholds it, and knows that it is for him creation puts on this delightful appearance, that he alone is capable of enjoying its various beauties, and that he is the priest of nature, placed on earth to offer the incense of praise and thanks for the irrational inhabitants of the earth! Change the scene. Let the eye ramble among a collection of rugged mountains, or expatiate over a tract of sandy country, where the hand of culture was never employed, and nothing, but here and there a shrub, relieves the aching sight. From such scenes, how naturally will the Christian spectator turn his eyes upon himself, and ask: "Is not this my state too? Is not my soul like those rocks, entirely barren of the good fruits of virtue and devotion? Do not I, like the sandy plain, imbibe indeed the shower, but render no increase? Oh! when, *instead of the shrub shall come up the firtree?* when, *instead of the nettle shall come up the myrtle tree?*" The sea, in like manner, furnishes various hints, which may be improved into useful considerations. Is the tide ebbing?—it will soon flow. Is it flowing?—it will quickly ebb. There is a similar ebb and flow in human affairs. The man who is now prosperous, may, he knows not how soon, suffer a reverse of fortune; and the vessel that is now stranded, may be borne up again on the waters, and blessed with a successful voyage. At one time, calm and unruffled, the water sleeps upon the shore, presenting to the astonished eye a correct and beautiful reflection of the azure heaven. How like the true Christian, who, at peace within himself, at peace with all around him, bears in his bosom a real resemblance of his Maker! At another time, the waters are thrown into the most tumultuous agitation. Vexed by the storm, the foaming waves mix in wild battle. Exactly such is the mental state of the wicked: agitated by the winds of vain desires, they have no rest, but suffer an eternal storm. A constant remembrance of the swiftness of time, and the danger of procrastination, is one of the best incitements to virtuous efforts: and how many natural phenomena conspire to fix this import-

ant truth full in our view. The sun, rising, attaining the meridian, declining, and setting; the moon, incessantly changing her aspect and stages; the silent but steady lapse of the rivers, the day displacing the night, and night again succeeding the day, together with the constant rotation of the seasons, are, or should be, sufficient to keep us ever in mind of the lapse of time and the flux of life. Who, amid the awful stillness of midnight, while creation suffers a temporary death, can awake from his slumber, and not think of the yet more awful stillness of the grave, and of that final sleep which must soon fall upon him? Who can hear the appalling roar of the thunder, without casting his thoughts forward to that last trumpet, the sound of which shall rouse from the grave dust that has there slumbered out ages, and summon every child of Adam to an eternity of wo or of happiness? But the richest field for serious consideration and instructive thought is,—the heavens; those immeasurable tracks of ether, where worlds unnumbered regularly perform their amazing revolutions, and to our limited sight worlds unnumbered are lost. Who can look upward to the midnight sky, and with the eye of reason contemplate its rolling wonders, and not stand astonished at the inconceivable power of Him, whose bare thought created *the heavens and the hosts thereof?* Who, at the sight, does not shrink into himself, and, conscious of his own insignificance, exclaim, with David: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* Who can help feeling and despising the abject littleness of all terrestrial grandeur? Have these milder glories of the night disappeared, and does the potent sun, throned in the south, assert his sole dominion? Oh, while your eye, dazzled at the blaze of his splendor, turns for relief to your native sod, your breast must be a stranger to the powerful allurements of Christian hope, if you do not reflect, that the most abject of the faithful followers of the crucified Jesus, though a child of dust, and now a prey to many miseries, shall shortly rise in triumph to a higher sphere, and shine with superior, as well as more enduring, brightness.

But, my brethren, we need neither ascend to the heavens, nor traverse the sublime or beautiful scenes of the earth, for instruction: the most familiar objects are replete with it. *Ask the beasts, and they shall teach thee.* The docile steed tells us to

be obedient; from the laborious ox we should learn to be patient; the very insects of the ground are constituted our instructors by divine authority: *Go to the ant, O sluggard, and consider her ways, and learn wisdom.* Nay, from the smallest sand upon the sea shore, the vainest philosopher might derive a lesson, which many have yet to learn. For there is not an atom in creation, but has about it questions which the wit of man is unable to solve. However little, it has something of infinity in it, and reaches far beyond the little stretch of all our boasted powers of reasoning. And should not this be sufficient to deter the vain creature from sitting in judgment on the ways of Providence, and from condemning when unable to comprehend?

Thus universal nature, from the starry canopy to the dust beneath our feet, teems with instruction. It might, in like manner, be shown that, from the most trifling incident in life, some salutary moral may be extracted. For example, do you suffer cold, heat, hunger, or any other inconvenience? You know that it is the punishment of sin, from which alone all evil springs; and you know that the chastisements which attend sin here are slight in comparison with those which will overtake it hereafter. Therefore, while you abhor even transitory pain, your own experience should teach you to shun that which would involve you in pains eternal. Do you enjoy any of the pleasures of life? You know that God is its source, and therefore should raise an eye of gratitude to your Benefactor: you know that infinitely greater pleasures are in store for you, if you faithfully observe his law; hence your present gratification should lead you to resolve upon steady obedience, that so you may secure endless enjoyment. It could easily be made to appear that even the vices and follies which we see practised ought to be so many exhortations to virtue. Indeed, who ever took a deliberate survey of the proud man, and noted his fantastic airs, his affected sneer, his haughty mien, supercilious brow, and eye of defiance, without becoming sensible that in truth *pride was not made for men*, conceiving the utmost contempt for so despicable a character, and, whatever might be his own share of the passion, determining to restrain it within the bounds of decency? Who can view a man in anger, his rapid motions, quivering lips, glaring eyes, and inflamed countenance,

and listen to the unmeasured abuse which he then directs, perhaps, against his best friend, without resolving for ever to keep in check a passion that would deprive him of his reason, and place him, for the time, on a level with the maniac. Similar observations might be made upon avarice, sloth, gluttony, and every vice which either moves contempt or excites hatred. For the man of reflection ever considers that whatever moves his contempt when observed in another, will move the contempt of others when observed in himself; and that that which, seen in another, excites his hatred will, if seen in him, equally excite the hatred of others.

If nature and life are thus instructive, death is still more so. Death has been emphatically styled the great teacher, and a death-bed has been termed, not without reason, the true school of wisdom. A view of the saint, calm, and undaunted at approaching dissolution, nay, joyful that the hour is at length arrived which will free him from all danger of any more offending his Maker, and be the beginning of an eternity of bliss: a view of the sinner forcibly torn from all he loves, and dragged into the presenee of an irritated Deity, whose justice he knows will hurl him into torments as durable as they are excruciating, must be allowed to be, of all exhortations to virtue, the strongest and most affecting. But the terrific horrors of the one, and the placid serenity of the other, it is perhaps equally rare to witness and difficult to paint. We will, therefore, be content with the last moments of the ordinary Christian, of whose fate, whatever our wishes or even our judgments whisper, we must remain in uncertainty. Recall, then, to mind the scene, perhaps almost forgotten. Extended on the bed, from which he will not be removed but to the darksome grave, lies a fellow-student. Art has done its all. The raging disease mocks the power of medicine, and hastens with resistless impetuosity to execute its dreadful errand. The frequently tossed arm, and the restless head, raising itself with difficulty, and again sinking exhausted on the pillow, show the bodily agonies which he endures. Slower and slower heaves the breast. The eye has lost that wild stare which lately startled the beholder; it grows dim and closes, as the darkness of that long night into which it is entering falls upon it. The last motion of the arm has stretched it

lifeless along the bed: and though, at intervals, a momentary struggle distorts the features, the victim of death seems resigned to his fate.

And who is this that so strongly demands our pity? Is it the weak, the sickly, the aged? No! it is the young, the healthy, the vigorous, the lively. It is he whom we lately saw exulting in his strength, foremost in the race, the life of the game, loudest in the mirthful circle. Where, now, the vigor on which he once prided himself? Where the airy hopes and plans of future life which we heard him express, some of us, perhaps, assisted him to form? What an awful warning is this, my brethren, to be always ready! How eloquently do the quivering lips of an expiring brother repeat those words of Christ? *Be ye ready, for you know not at what hour the Son of man cometh!* Oh! sentence divinely true. *You know not the hour.* We know, indeed, that we must all, every one of us, follow him: yes, though once likely to precede, we now shall follow. But how soon? This question can be but partially answered. In the common course of things, within another year or two the eternal lot of some one in the small number here assembled will be determined. He will be secure of never-ending happiness, or doomed to everlasting misery. But who this is to be, in vain does human penetration strive to discover. Does it point to the weak? Alas, he was not of the feeble, and yet——. Besides, death is a tyrant not less capricious than cruel, who delights to wither the strong and prostrate the haughty. He passes by the infirm and the aged, as unworthy his regard. But is there one who appears to defy his power? whose constitution seems to promise a long series of earthly satisfactions? On him the tyrant's baleful eyes are fixed; he, often first, is doomed to writhe beneath his all-conquering arms. Shall we, then, turn to the robust? Not only do appearances forbid, but we ourselves have, most of us, in this house, seen the feeble as well as the vigorous consigned to the tomb. Convinced, then, as we are, that some of us will soon be summoned out of the world, and having no means of discovering to whose lot it will fall, what must be our infatuation if we do not hold ourselves in readiness for our passage! Shall the prisoner who has heard the sentence of death pronounced upon himself, but is kept in

ignorance of the time of execution, trifle away the small remnant of his moments? This is the grand lesson furnished by the death-bed. Irresistibly forcing on the mind the remembrance of our end, it shows the necessity of doing that which, if neglected, must be followed, to say the least, by an eternity of fruitless repentance: and from this flow all those other lessons in which it is so abundant.

Let the sensualist view the scene: however deeply he has drunk of the intoxicating cup of pleasure, how fast soever he may sleep in the lap of indolence, this sight, if any, will rouse him from his voluptuous lethargy, and force him to acknowledge his folly in risking eternal happiness for the sake of a few sordid gratifications,—gratifications which, if he can retain them till death, will but add anguish to the agonizing hour, severity to the separating stroke.

It snatches from the vain man that deceitful mirror, held before him by self-love, in which he views himself with so much complacency.

It convinces the proud man of the absurdity of glorying in the few advantages which he possesses, or thinks he possesses, over his fellow-creatures. It places before him, in the clearest light, the meanness of the great and the weakness of the strong; assuring him, that disease and death will soon reduce him to a state which the slave himself shudders to contemplate: that soon, eternally forgetful of all his honors and titles, he must moulder into common dust, with no attendant save the dusty statue, no mark of dignity but the weather-beaten hatchment and the tattered escutcheon.

Nothing can be better calculated than the sight of a dying man to bring the hypocrite to a sense of his miserable condition. "Oh!" he thinks within himself, "when I am reduced to this extremity, when that which I fear has come upon me, shall I be able then to retain my mask? Shall I be able to prevaricate with my God, when on the very threshold of his presence? How shall I shudder, and stand aghast on the brink of the precipice, afraid to plunge into the abyss of eternity, unable to maintain any footing on the verge of life! Should I, though I tremble at the thought, should I even then dare it, yet what will it avail? I shall be but a criminal, confined to the deep strong

dungeon of the grave, in reserve against the day of trial; a day, on which the inmost recesses of my heart will be laid open to the inspection of all mankind."

But, if the thought is so appalling to the man of deceit, it is as consoling for the man of affliction. It fortifies him to endure with patience whatever Providence may be pleased to appoint; for it is an earnest, that his trials shall have an end, that the day will come when pain, in all its various forms, shall be no more, and he shall find himself in the arms of his Saviour, exulting in liberty and joy, to live for ever in the smile of God.

Thus have we seen that nature, in all her diversity of times, seasons, and appearances, that life, in its endless multiplicity of events, and that death, in its variety of shapes, are ever whispering to the ear of reflection some moral lesson: in other words, that the Christian, from every object and every incident, can extract spiritual nourishment, as the bee gathers honey from every flower. I do not pretend, that this practice is equally easy to every part of mankind; I speak chiefly of men of cultivated understandings, such as I am now addressing; at the same time, I would not be thought to suppose the rude and illiterate portion of our species incapable of it. No; there is not a Christian but knows there is a God, and that it is only by the exertion of the omnipotence of this God, that he, or any of the objects around him, exists. And, even with no more knowledge than this, he can render material objects subservient to the sanctification of his soul. In every thing, let him see a God sustaining it: in his every action, let him remember, and in humble simplicity adore the Being, without whose assistance he could neither move, nor live, nor exist. When the sun rises or sets in the heavens, when the moon reflects her milder light; when spring paints the earth with glowing colors, when summer shines in its glory, when autumn pours forth its abundance, when winter returns with its piercing cold and howling blasts, in all this let him view the Creator variously manifesting himself in his works. Let him catch a glimpse of his grandeur in the lightning, meet his smiles in the verdant fields, and feel his influence in the enlivening ray and the refreshing breeze. Let him hear his voice in the resounding wave, the headlong torrent, and the murmuring rill; adore his majesty in the solemn shade

of the forest, and live in the world as in a spacious and august temple, where the presence of the God-head continually inspires devotion.

This exercise, then, is practicable on all occasions and to all persons: but is it likewise highly beneficial? Very little consideration is necessary to answer this question; and, therefore, without enumerating its many advantages, or pointing out the various passages of Scripture and the Fathers where it is recommended, I shall confine myself to a single remark. He, who descended from heaven to set us *an example that we might follow his steps*, evinced, during his sojourn on earth, a peculiar predilection for this sort of exercise. Admirable is the address with which he spiritualizes every common event and natural appearance. Surveying, with his disciples, the corn yet green in the fields, he reminds them that the harvest which they are to reap is quite ready for the sickle. *Do not you say there are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest.* When resting on the brink of a well, wearied after a long journey, and exhausted with the heat of a noonday sun, before he allays the cravings of thirst, he drops into a most instructive conversation concerning the water of which those who drink *shall not thirst for ever.* When he calls to the ministry of the gospel the poor fishers who happened then to be employed in laying their nets, *he saith to them, come ye after me, and I will make you to be fishers of men.* Sitting at a table, where great care was taken to please him with the variety and elegance of the entertainment, he seizes the opportunity to censure over-great solicitude about worldly affairs, and to inculcate the utmost assiduity in the only thing necessary. On another occasion, he sends his disciples, men ordained to teach the universe, to learn maxims of the first importance from the most insignificant birds that wander through the air, from the meanest herbs that grow wild on the ground. His sublimest instructions generally sprung from the incidental occurrences which presented themselves in the course of his ministry. From that striking spectacle of the rising sun, how natural, yet how sublime, is the transition to himself, as rising on the moral world, and, with the splendor of that wisdom, truth, and sanc-

tity, which he brought from heaven, dispelling the gloom of Jewish superstition and of heathen idolatry. The ambition of two of his apostles, James and John, for pre-eminence in their Master's kingdom, introduces the interesting lecture on humility, and on the far nobler ambition of pre-eminence in good. When the affinity of natural relationship is obtruded on his notice, he diverts the attention of his hearers to the more permanent relationship which corresponding virtues would establish between himself and his true disciples. To the captious question of a Jewish lawyer, we owe the beautiful parable of the wounded Samaritan, and the fine lesson of considering every fellow-creature in distress as a neighbor and a brother. Thus do we ever find our great Master, with a happy mixture of majesty and familiarity, of dignity and condescension, deducing from the most trifling object or circumstance the sublimest truths; connecting philosophy with common life, and converting even the sphere of business and amusement into a school of divine science, of that pure theology, that chaste morality, which the followers of Zeno or Socrates, with all their parade, could never teach, could never learn.

Let us, at least, my brethren, who do not wish the name of Christians, which we bear, to be a title of no import, let us at least follow this amiable example of our Redeemer. Let us not be guilty of a sullenness against God, of a contempt for his favors, by rejecting these easy and delightful means which he has put into our hands of improving our virtue. In fine, let us, by accustoming our minds to dwell continually on sacred subjects during our short stay in this vale of tears, prepare ourselves for that eternal year of contemplation on the Divinity itself, which, with purified hearts and enlarged faculties, we hope to enjoy in the kingdom of our heavenly Father.

Sermon XXXX.

Ascension Day.

ON ETERNITY.

Man shall go into the house of his eternity.—Eccles. xii. 5.

It is clear, then, that, besides his present temporary dwelling, man has another permanent abode, *the house of his eternity;* besides his present circumscribed domain, another region of vast and boundless extent beyond it. With a little observation, indeed, he might easily discover this himself, without referring to authority. For, placed where he is, he sees every thing in motion around him, every thing in progress to some general termination, *all things*, as the Wise Man expresses it, *hastening to one place, as all the rivers run into the sea.* Scarcely has he begun to look around him in life, when he misses many, whom he early knew; as he advances along, he sees coevals drop one by one at his side and disappear, suddenly swallowed up and lost in some vast devouring abyss: and he feels himself, at the same time, irresistibly drawn along, as by some secret force, doubtless, when he touches the predestined line, to make, in his turn, the same mysterious and awful exit.

That he should be ignorant, then, even by his own observation, of his approaching destiny, is scarcely conceivable;—the great wonder is, that, anxious and forecasting as he is from nature, he should not look forward, and studiously pry into that future land, which must be so interesting to him. Wonderful, however, as it may appear, the forgetfulness of it is well known to be common and almost general: few, as I complained on a former occasion, reflect on time, but still fewer meditate on eternity. If, in the silence of retirement, a few contemplative

souls employ themselves, like the royal prophet, in pondering on the eternal years; in the world at large, the subject is, I fear, an unknown and certainly an unexplored one: and yet, for all classes of men, there is none more necessary and important, as there is no other more sublime.

Suffer me, then, as the counterpart to one of my late addresses, to bring the subject forward, and to fix it for once steadily before your contemplation: no subject seems better suited to the present festival, on which we behold Jesus Christ ascending into heaven, and taking his seat on the right hand of Him, to whom *a thousand years are but as yesterday, and in whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration.* I will, then, request of you to close your eyes for a time to the present scene of things, and, throwing it by the force of imagination behind you, to stand in spirit on the verge of that other eternal scene, to which we are all so fast approaching, and there seriously contemplate what the lights both of reason and religion discover to your view; while I employ myself in pointing your attention in succession to its principal features, in that order which appears to me most natural and best adapted to favor their impression.

The first feature which strikes us in eternity, is the sublime and stupendous character of its goods and its evils. Good and evil are the two incessant objects of man, the former of his desire and pursuit, and the latter of his aversion and flight. But do the so-called goods and evils of the earth deserve the name? Let us briefly examine them. Where, in the first place, in this valley of tears, shall we find what really deserves the name of good? Shall we give that title to what are called the honors and dignities of life? Alas! those who have been the most ardent in the pursuit, and the most successful in the attainment of these have ever been the bitterest and most severe in their censures and complaints. Thousands, in the anguish of disappointment, have sighed in secret for that mediocrity, obscure but peaceful, from which they rose; and, in the history of the world, not a few have been seen actually to descend from the throne itself, to seek in a lower station that common peace and content, which they in vain wooed on the envied seat of power. Shall we then allow the name to affluence? an anxious state of apparent advantage, which, under a showy exterior, is known to

contain nothing better than a listless indifference to present possessions and a feverish solicitude for further acquisitions. Or shall we dignify with the name of good the pleasures of the earth? enjoyments often common with the brutes, and, at the best, empty in their nature, momentary in their duration, and bitter in their close. No! these are all foreign and external to the soul: they might be goods to a lower being, but to the heaven-born spirit they are mean and inadequate; and to think of satisfying her immortal longings with any such food as this, is an insult to her sublime nature.

But, perhaps, if none of these separately, the aggregate of them all might aspire to the appellation of good. Few, indeed, can ever hope to realize the experiment, however it has been made; and divine Providence, it is remarkable, has taken care that, even up to this extreme, the perverse ambition of man shall have no excuse in hope or ignorance. Solomon was the most fortunate of men; indeed, the only individual who ever had it in his power to estimate fairly the sum total of sublunary goods.

God himself had poured every thing into his bosom; he had not a wish under the sun ungratified; and the most consummate wisdom was at hand to teach him how to enjoy his advantages. Can any future son of Adam expect so much? *Who*, exclaims he himself, *shall ever abound in delights, as I have done?* Yet, my brethren, you will remember the emphatic sentence which he has left upon record; a sentence, which, stamped with the seal of eternal truth, will descend to the end of time a loud and lasting condemnation of all the misguided pursuits of man: *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.* So much for the goods of this world: let us now take a glimpse of its evils.

Is there any thing in the world that truly deserves the name of evil? There is not, except in a very limited and qualified sense. Let us even suppose all that goes under that name collected together and heaped on one hard-fated individual; still his case would be tolerable; it would still leave him many alleviations. Pity might soothe his pains; the charity of others might relieve them; time would blunt their edge; despair itself, if he had no better resource, would give to his singular case a kind of melancholy consolation; and religion, were he so happy

as to know her influence, would quite change its nature, would even convert it into a real and supereminent good, by making it subservient to his eternal felicity. So that, in short, it is literally true to say, that there is no absolute evil in this world, excepting sin. No, my friends, it is to eternity that we must turn for true goods and evils; there alone is their real seat; and, I trust, they will not lose by being thus brought for a moment into juxtaposition with their namesakes of the earth.

Lift up your eyes, then, and see the first goods of eternity. The soul and all her desires are at once satisfied by the first tidings that are brought us: and brought us, remember, by one who had witnessed what he testifies: *Neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those that love him.* Therefore, create a paradise according to your own hearts; collect together every possible object of desire in this world, riches, honors, delights; assemble every species of enjoyment, whether it be of the sense or of the imagination, of the understanding or of the heart, and with them make up one rich, comprehensive, and universal good, such as you think shall satisfy all your wants, and leave not a possible wish ungratified: and, when you have done so, you are here assured that all this is nothing; that you may safely despise it; that it is mean and inadequate, unfit even to furnish you with an idea of what is the real good of eternity! And would you know why, my brethren? Would you know why the real good of eternity is so incomprehensible? Because, in fact, in order to comprehend it, you must be able to comprehend God himself. Yes, it is God himself who is the great Good of eternity! That vast ocean of all perfection, of all beauty, of every delight, of every thing that the mind can conceive excellent and charming, and infinitely more, this is the great good of eternity, the universal good of all and the particular good of each! And shall not this suffice? Did the most daring wish of the most aspiring mind ever go beyond this? How low, then, how pitiful, how grovelling must that soul be that can rest on the poor objects of this world, when so sublime a good is prepared for it in the next!

So much for the goods of eternity. Directing your attention, now, to another scene, turn your eyes on the low abyss of

hell, where are assembled all the evils of eternity. And here I might offer the subject again to your imagination; but I shall, in this part, enter into more detail, both because we are better acquainted with pain than pleasure, and because we find in it a more powerful stimulus.

For the infliction, then, of that pain, which, under various forms, constitutes the great evil of eternity, the Almighty, in the first place, has chosen the most subtle, the most violent, the most terrible of our elements on earth,—fire. But by this word, you must here understand something very remote from what we are hitherto acquainted with, as different in its nature as in its object. Our feeble element was created merely for our convenience, and its powers are limited to that purpose: the fire of hell was created expressly for punishment; and we may be sure, that, in the hands of avenging Omnipotence, it will be terribly adequate to its object. Hence, it requires no fuel to nourish it; it wants only its victims, and the angry breath of Him who kindled it. In this atmosphere of fire the wicked are plunged: they live in it, if such an existence can be called life. It enwraps and envelopes their frames; it pervades and penetrates their whole substance; it searches into their very vitals. It reaches the soul, even in her inmost recesses; and with its avenging action seizes, in a wonderful manner, and excruciates her immaterial substance. There is nothing inconceivable in this; if, in our present state, we see the soul acting instantaneously upon matter, it will not cost Omnipotence much to reverse the operation. Add, now, to this torment the dreadful prison in which the fire is pent up with its victims; and the low vaults from which it incessantly reverberates upon them; the gross pitchy darkness in which, fire as it is, it still leaves them immersed; the burning chains which immovably fetter them down, each in his cell of fire;—the cruel and insulting tormentors, the companions in wo without concern and without compassion; the appalling shrieks, the groans of despair, and the yells of blasphemy. I have only assembled from sacred writ a few sketches; you will think the picture already loaded, but it is yet far from complete. These are its more obvious parts: the pains of the soul are less visible but more terrible. Here follows the direful catalogue: bitter remorse, fruitless repentance, unavailing an-

guish, black despair, impotent rage, self-devouring madness;—an understanding clouded with the darkest night; a will cursed with eternal perversity; an imagination haunted with the most horrid spectres; a conscience incessantly gnawed by the never-dying worm; a memory continually calling up the torturing past; and a foresight for ever brooding on the dreadful future.

I have closed but not completed the catalogue: alas! hell yet wants its last and greatest terror. All the above might be endured, if it left the suffering creature any hope or resource in the Creator: but, as the supreme Good is the possession, so the sovereign evil is the privation of God. Yes, the evil of all evils is the loss of God. And, my brethren, if you have not shuddered at its very mention, know, that it is only because you are yet inhabitants of this earth, where few have any sense of God, and none can know, by experience, what it is absolutely to lose him. The greatest sinner, the most abandoned wretch, does not lose God in this life; however remote he has wandered, he is still within the sphere of the Sovereign Good, and from that universal source he is still relieved and refreshed with the taste of good, in a thousand different ways; because he is still connected with him by a thousand secret ties.

But no sooner does he enter within eternity, than all those ties are suddenly and violently burst, and the unhappy wretch is flung off from the Sovereign Good, unadhering by a single connection. The natural impulse of the soul towards God is strong and irresistible: even here below it sometimes exerts a wonderful force. But, in this probationary world, a thousand objects cross its path and deaden its influence, and the very nature of our present existence requires that it should be moderated. But no sooner shall the partition wall be broken down, than it will instantly exert all its native power, and the insulated soul will rush to her centre, with a vehemence, of which we shall in vain search nature for an image; the rapid arrow flying to its mark, or the ponderous stone rushing again to the earth, can give no idea of the irresistible attraction of the creature to its Creator. And yet he himself, who infixed this attraction, who gave and still continues its impetuous force, will himself deliberately counteract it; he will bind down the un-

happy creature in this state of violence, and mock at all her idle efforts to approach him. This it is to lose God!

But here let me correct an inaccuracy which I was lately guilty of. I said the sinner would not be held to God by a single tie: but can this be true? Is not man essentially a connected and dependent being? Undoubtedly he is; and therefore he must still hold to God by some tie, even when an outcast. By what chain, then? By that of his justice! Yes, the sinner will serve, and only serve, for the display of the most terrible of God's attributes: he will be of no use, for eternity, but to be subject-matter of eternal vengeance! Hence, the wicked, who, in the Scripture, are frequently designated by the name of useless, are likened to the stubble of the field, which, after the harvest has been reaped, is of no use but to feed the flames. *The congregation of sinners*, says the Wise Man, *is like tares heaped together, and the end of them is a flame of fire.* Such, my brethren, are the evils of eternity. Let us, then, henceforward change our language, or at least our ideas, on this subject, and refer all good and evil only to eternity.

The next circumstance that strikes us in eternity, is the simplicity of its division. This world is distributed into a great variety of conditions; the world to come has but two; two grand compartments,—heaven and hell; one comprising all the goods, the other all the evils, which we have been considering. There is no third state possible; they are two extremes without a medium; and to one of these extremes all the sons of Adam are inevitably tending, and must take their place in one of them at the end of time.

What is more alarming, we see these two divisions very unequal; the one containing only a select few, the other comprising the vast bulk of the human race. You are all familiar with that alarming image in holy writ, which compares the number of the saved to the few olives that survive the gathering, or the scanty grapes that escape the eye and hand of the vintner. You have all frequently heard the oracle from the mouth of truth itself: *Wide is the gate and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction; and many there are that go in thereat. How narrow is the gate*, (here he speaks with admiration: he, who by nature is incapable of admiration,) *how narrow is the gate and*

straight the way, that leadeth to life; and few there are that find it.

Observe, after this, another remarkable feature in eternity, —its fixed and unvarying aspect. In this world all is motion, all is change: *There is nothing*, says the Wise Man, *permanent under the sun.* Change seems even essential to this world: without change there could be no hope; and, without hope, human affairs would stagnate. How different is the appearance, as soon as we set foot in eternity! all is fixed and stable, immovable and unchangeable, like the Omnipotent King himself, who rules in that awful region; and every spirit that enters within its precincts instantly becomes invested with the same attribute. The just man is there securely seated on his throne of glory, and the lapse of ages shall never be able to disturb its immortal base. The sinner is there chained down in his everlasting dungeon; and whole eternities rolled over his head will still find him in the same melancholy posture. It is vain for him to sigh, to weep, and to groan: on earth these things might have availed him; but, in eternity, they are futile, nor shall he ever have power to alter one iota of his dreadful destiny!

Over these views, however, as being obvious and consequent to one another, I pass more rapidly on, to come to that which is the grandest, and may be called the peculiar and characteristic, feature of eternity; and that is, its endless duration. And here it is that the subject rises in all its sublimity, and forcibly seizes and overpowers the human mind. You are familiar with the words *for ever;* they might be given as a brief epitome of the subject, and are, perhaps, the sublimest and most comprehensive words to be found in human language. But have you ever weighed well their import? So vast is it, so stupendous, as to give a species of infinitude to every object to which the term may be applied. Conceive only a slight pain, and attach to it the two words *for ever*, and it immediately becomes an infinite and overwhelming evil, something too great for the human mind to compass. Assemble together, on one hand, all the sufferings of life, nay, all the torments of hell, and give them a thousand years' duration; place against them, on the other hand, only a small pain, but with eternity for its concomitant;—and which do you think the heavier evil? It is a

truth, a certain truth, that, in just estimation, the latter would preponderate, and that a wise man ought to choose the other in preference! Let us enter, then, on the subject, and endeavor, if we can, to arrive at some conception of this immeasurable duration.

I know, in the first place, that it is much easier to say what eternity is not, than what it is; that it is not millions of years, that it is not millions of millions; but as this would leave only a weak and transient and merely negative impression on the mind, which never so much feels the greatness of any subject as when it has been baffled in its utmost efforts to comprehend it, let us, for once, boldly make an attempt at a positive calculation.

Our present life is something within our comprehension; we will therefore commence with that. Its seventy years, the scanty remnant of what it once was, is still extensive enough to fill our eye in the prospect, and to leave an impression of length in the transition. Give it, then, every advantage; assign it again its primeval and patriarchal length; would it not then seem long in the passage? But this is nothing; let us state it at once at the age of the world. What countless revolutions have taken place, in the vast space of six thousand years! How many times has the great luminary of day traversed the heavens in this lengthened period! How many once memorable epochs have been lost and forgotten in this vast night of ages! Ask the first of men, the eldest son of time, what this series has seemed to him in its passage? Looking back over its immense expanse, he will call it at once eternity; he will have no other term to express it by! But, my brethren, what is all this? To arrive at any real resemblance to eternity, we must not stop at such puny calculations; we must throw millions at once into the amount.

Compute, then, to the utmost extent of your power and imagination; take years or ages at pleasure, for your reckoning, (the difference is here nothing:) then borrow of the earth its sands and of the sea its waters, to aid you in the unequal task, and let mathematics, too, bring in all its significant ciphers, and its thick redoubling powers;—and when, with their united aid, you have made out your utmost amount, then stand for a mo-

ment, and ponder on these accumulated millions, this mountain of eternity!

Does it seem possible to your imagination ever to exhaust it? And yet the period will certainly come about, in eternity, when each individual here present shall be able with truth to exclaim that he has reached the last unit of the incalculable sum! Does this seem much to you? And yet it is nothing. What have you done? you have taken from eternity all that you could, and you have still left eternity as you found it, still infinite and entire! You thought to have made a deep inroad into this vast region; and you are yet standing on its frontier line: another region still lies beyond, as vast and vaster than all you have explored. You must commence again, you must renew your labors, and repeat your calculations; nay, involve them and multiply them upon themselves, till the tired imagination sinks under the task: still you have effected nothing: you have, after all, got no further than the beginning of eternity!

O eternity! vast and interminable abyss! vain are all our attempts to measure or estimate thee! No sooner has man, standing here on thy awful shore, erected, with vast effort and infinite labor, thy fabric of his utmost calculations, than the first wave of thy mighty ocean swallows it up! Here bring in what we said before of the goods and evils of eternity; or, better, recollect what was said of eternity and its import, when attached to the slightest evil you know in this world, and then connect it with the mighty evils detailed before; and, with this standard before you, pass your judgment on the ways of men. They are divided, you see, in this life, into two great but unequal classes, the wicked and the virtuous, the men of this world, as they may be called, and the men of eternity. The former, the immense majority, repute and call the latter fools and their ways folly; and the latter, if not in language, in judgment and conviction at least, retort the imputation. Judge you now between them: on which side falls the charge of madness? Ah! you see, you here feel, that, severely as the world has been reprobated, it has not been injured; it well deserves its maledictions, even if they had not come from the mouth of the Son of God himself. This single subject will ever stand its ample and emphatic condemnation.

Yes, my brethren, if there are any difficulties in the ways of God, or of those who serve him, eternity fully solves them all. If the martyrs suffered themselves to be made the sport of cruelty in every form, eternity is their justification; if thousands of penitents crowded to the deserts, and there subjected themselves to austerities which some would call extravagant, eternity is their ample apology; if some, in these days of tepidity, are seen to throw up the choicest worldly advantages, to immure themselves in the gloom and destitution of a cloister, eternity stamps their censured choice with the truest wisdom; in fine, to whatever apparently excessive lengths the servants of God have pushed their holy fervor, eternity immediately corrects every appearance, and triumphantly vindicates their reputed folly.

I have, before I conclude, but one moral feature to point to in the scene before us; but it is an interesting one: I mean its proximity! Yes, I desired you to stand in spirit on the borders of this future world; but the exhortation ought to have been superfluous; for you are there in reality; you stand with your foot actually pressing on its margin, ready this very instant, if the Sovereign Disposer so ordain, to take the eternal plunge. Do you start at the information? It is nothing new to you; you are here not ignorant, but heedless. For what! my brethren, are you not aware of your situation? Do you not know, that there is not an hour that passes, but may be your last in this life? That is to say, that this very moment or the next may transport you into this eternity; may cast you on one side of its momentous alternative; may place you among its goods or its evils, vast as they are; may fix you there immovably and for ever, as immutable, as eternal as God himself? You know this my brethren, and are you prepared for the transition? are you ready at this moment to make your exit? If not, where is your reason? where is your love of yourselves?—placed on the very edge of a dizzy and slippery precipice, with an interminable gulf yawning below, in danger every instant of a fall, threatened with a surprise, and told that, if you do not watch, you will be taken off your guard, and, seeing the threat daily realized in your acquaintance, and yet standing at your ease, with eyes averted, without fear and without caution!

Ah! my brethren, awake to your real situation; open your eyes to what is before you, to what is so near you; fix your view, henceforward, on this awful futurity, or at least frequently call it up in spirit before you, as you have done this day, and without delay make ready for it. Thus, and thus only, will that last momentous passage, which we must all make, and make so soon, and can make but once, and may make so unfortunately, be made by you with safety and success: thus will you escape all the enormous evils, and secure the inestimable goods, of eternity!

Sermon XXXIX.

Sixth Sunday after Easter.

A CHARITY SERMON.*

How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?—PSALM CXXXVI. 4.

THE words of my text are taken from the hundred and thirty-sixth Psalm, in which David prophetically deplores the miseries of the Babylonish captivity. Rapt into future ages, he sees the public worship of his God abolished, the temple defiled, stripped of its sacred ornaments, and reduced to ruins; the Holy City desolate, and, as a widowed woman, bewailing the absence of her children. They are distant far in the land of the oppressor. *Upon the rivers of Babylon*, says the prophet, *there we sat and wept, when we remembered Sion. On the willows in the midst thereof we hung up our instruments. For there they that led us into captivity required of us the words of songs; and they that carried us away said, Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion. How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?* Far from our native country, the land of our fathers, our temple prostrate in the dust; our priests scattered, our hierarchy broken, our Sabbaths and our feasts unproclaimed and unkept, how, in the presence of the scoffer, can we raise the song to our God? My brethren, the language of the Jews might, not long since, have been ours. There must be many before me who can remember the time when the name of Catholic was as despicable in the eyes of an Englishman as that of Jew appeared to the Babylonian: a time when our circumstances differed from those of the captive sons of Jacob but in this, that

* Preached at the opening of a Charity School.

the Jew was removed to a distant land, and spared the pain which the sight of altars overturned and a profanated sanctuary would have inflicted: while the Catholic was made an alien in the place of his birth, and had daily before his eyes the effects of fanatical impiety and more than Gothic barbarism.

But, thanks to that Providence, which is not always angry and will not threaten for ever; thanks to the increasing liberality of our countrymen and Government, again are we permitted in public to worship the Almighty as our forefathers worshipped; altars again may be built to his honor: attendance at his solemn service is no longer felony: and the song of thanksgiving, and the sounds of jubilation may now be added to the silent overflowings of a grateful heart. Yes, again does the religion of our ancestors, the religion of the martyrs, the religion of the Chrysostoms, the Austins, the Gregories, and the Jeroms appear, if not in all the splendor with which the primitive devotion of kings and sainted emperors surrounded her, yet in a not unbecoming attire; if the lofty and columned cathedral be not erected to her honor, yet is an edifice furnished for her abode; if princes and nobles do not flock in crowds to her worship, yet are her altars not unattended. It remains, then, my brethren, for us to make a right use of the advantages of which we at length have recovered the possession.

Among these advantages, one to which I have not yet alluded, but one of the most important, is the right of educating as you please your own offspring. Nature itself gives that right to the parent, and the history of the world furnishes but two instances in which that right has been publicly invaded. To the honor of human nature, it should be known, that among the countless persecutions that have been levelled at the church of Christ, only twice has the malice of the persecutor been carried to such an extent as to prevent the persecuted from educating the young of their own communion. The Roman emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate, was the first, who, in the vain hope of falsifying the divine assurance that the gates of hell should not prevail against the Church, published an edict forbidding the Christians to teach schools within the precincts of the empire. After the lapse of twelve hundred years, his example was followed and improved upon by the then oppressive government

of this country. The Catholics of England were not only prohibited, under heavy penalties, from having their children instructed by teachers of their own principles in their native land, but were subjected to still heavier penalties if they sent their children abroad for that education which could not be procured for them at home. While this law continued in force, it surely is not surprising that but very few Catholic seminaries existed in a country in which they were proscribed; and evidently it is most unjust, not to say absurd, in those who passed and supported this law, to upbraid Catholics with indifference or hostility to education. Catholicity hostile to education! How, then, does it happen that Protestant writers are found who assert and prove that the Catholic states of France, Italy, and Spain have produced incomparably more men of eminence, in all the departments of literature, than the United Kingdoms? Catholicity hostile to education! To what, then, is this nation indebted for its public schools, its halls, its colleges, and its two magnificent universities, erected by the hands and endowed out of the property of Catholics? Catholicity hostile to education! To what, then, are we to attribute that ardor and perseverance in pursuit of knowledge which have kept the Catholic clergy and laity at least on a level with the ministers and professors of Protestantism, in spite of the most iniquitous enactments to insure their ignorance?

But these enactments have ceased to stain the statute-book of the realm. The Catholic may now learn; the Catholic may now teach; the Catholic now may establish and support nurseries of learning. And well have our brethren in every part of the kingdom employed their recovered rights; ardent and generous has been the zeal which they have evinced in the sacred cause of education; for ever have they annihilated the calumny which would brand them as the enemies of learning. Since the reign of George III., under whom the unnatural penalties were repealed, nine colleges, sixty large and flourishing academies, three hundred daily charity schools, and about four hundred Sunday schools have been established, and are now supported by Catholics. My Catholic brethren, I call upon you this day to show, that you are allied to these generous friends of education in something more than the name. I call upon you prac-

tically to refute the charge of hostility to learning, which has recently been brought against you, and to prove, by your liberality this day, that, if you have hitherto been comparatively inactive, your inactivity has been owing merely to the want of a first impulse. I call upon you to show, that you are the true lineal descendants of those heroes, to whom England still looks up with pride and glory; that you inherit the spirit of the Arthurs, the Alfreds, the Wickams, and the other original promoters of science in Britain, and, though you are far behind them in the order of time, that you have not degenerated from them in zeal, perseverance, and generosity.

From the tone in which I am addressing you, my brethren, you must perceive, that it is not my intention to lay before you, in detail, the many motives which might be urged to excite your liberality on the present occasion. I deem it hardly necessary to observe, that the institution which I recommend to your patronage is of the most laudable nature and the most beneficial tendency. It comprises two illustrious works of mercy, seeks the advantage of the soul no less than of the body, and considers the eternal, as well as the temporal interests of those who are the objects of its attention. The design is to rescue from poverty and vice the children of the poor, to free from corporal distress and the more severe evils of mental wretchedness, those who, without the interposition of charitable aid, might pass through a life of infamy into an eternity of wo.

That ignorance is a very general cause of poverty, who will deny? and that poverty, in its severer forms, is one of the greatest calamities that flesh is heir to, you, at least, my brethren, are prepared to grant. The haughty and the gay, the votaries of pleasure and the slaves of ambition, may, indeed, be ignorant of the complicated miseries that weigh down a portion of their fellow-creatures, and long habits of selfishness may have rendered them callous to the soft suggestions of sympathy. But could even they, when seated at the festive board, in the hour of convivial enjoyment, could they know the sorrows of the miserable hovel or of the dark cellar, seemingly destined for the confinement of the villain or parricide, rather than for the abode of innocence,—oh, if there be still alive about their heart the smallest remains of sensibility, their souls would receive a shock

that must force them to dash the cup of pleasure from their lips and participate in the sorrows of their fellow-men. Could we transport them from their magnificent dwellings, where ten thousand arts combine to pamper their luxury and swell their pride, to those baneful haunts of wretchedness, and, by the faint glimmering of a dubious light, just discover to them the damp corner, where the forlorn sufferer lies, overcome with sickness, destitute of all nourishment, or with such only as at once prolongs his sufferings and his life; could they see on the scattered straw a brood of helpless infants, perishing alike with cold and hunger, insensible to the pains and wants of their parent, who, in all his anguish, feels more for them than for himself; could they behold the unspeakable and speechless wo of the hapless mother, feeling at once the sorrows of a parent and a wife: could they see her dishevelled hair, her disordered eye, and, from the view of her exterior, catch an idea of the agony of her mind: could they, in short, contemplate the accumulated miseries of this mournful group, and not dissolve into all the tenderness of commiseration, habitual dissipation must have extinguished every virtuous principle within them, and have bereaved them of all that is amiable, decorous, and worth preserving in human nature.

It is to avert these calamities, too often attending upon poverty, by removing that ignorance which is generally the cause of poverty, that I now solicit your patronage. It is to procure support for little children, who, unbefriended by more splendid protection, claim your bounty. It is to give peace and consolation to the poor parent when on the bed of death, by affording him an assurance, that, when he shall be no more, the kind hand of Christian charity shall guard his infant offspring, and preserve them from ruin.

But the institution for which I this day plead not only aims at preventing the corporal wants of the poor by means of education, but extends its influence to a superior purpose over the minds of its pupils. Poverty is neither the only nor the worst consequence of ignorance. Close in its train are seen to follow guilt and infamy. And, if there be any who can contemplate without concern the other evil effects of ignorance, let them consider the guilt and infamy to which it often leads; let them represent to their imagination those receptacles of intemperance, obscenity, and impiety, where man, raised by his Maker almost

to an equality with the angels, is degraded beneath the level of the brute. If still indifferent to the diffusion of virtue and the propagation of vice, there be one who can see without concern the fences of morality broken down, the distinction between good and evil exploded, and the religion of Jesus, the comfortable doctrines of grace and redemption, contemned and discarded, oh! let him repair to the cell of the convict, and spend the midnight hour with the murderer, who is doomed to fall a victim on the morrow to the justice of his country.

If you, my brethren, by your pious liberality, shall preserve one from this unhappy end, or from the crimes which deserve it, if you shall direct the pursuits of but one from fraud, violence, and brutal indulgence, to purer pleasures and better objects, you will have acted to a noble and a meritorious purpose. Yes! to a noble purpose. The least of the little ones who look up to you for aid is a being destined for immortality. Yesterday, that child was nothing; but when will it cease to be? Never! Eternity is written upon it, and the inscription is indelible, for it was traced by the finger of God. Ages of history passed before it was said of him, a child is born into the world; history will continue its annals, matter its combinations, the heavens their course; but he shall survive them all. The revolutions of ages shall be forgotten, the high events of life chase each other from the stage, the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and leave the spaces they have occupied to silence and to nothing. But this child shall then be. The basis of its existence cannot be shaken; but in those countless ages which its existence must fill, never forget that it will be either a happy spirit before the throne of God, or a hopeless outcast from heaven. If, then, it depend on you to stamp bliss on its immortality, to save a soul from death, and fit it for the joys of paradise, your liberality will be exerted to a noble purpose. And there is every probability of your success. You may reasonably expect that Heaven will give a blessing to your pious exertions; and the very condition and character of a young child are such as to excite your liveliest hopes. It is a tender plant, which you may easily bend in any direction, and the characters engraven on the delicate bark will grow deeper and larger with the growth of the tree. It is a piece of soft wax, that may be moulded into any

form, and is susceptible of any figure that you may choose to impress upon it. It is a slip of newly broken ground, in which, *without culture*, every vile propensity will flourish, and every thing that is good will be choked and destroyed. Malice, revenge, and anger,—envy, pride, and lust,—dishonesty, intemperance, and sloth,—every thing, in short, that has a tendency to unfit men for human society on earth, or for the society of saints and angels in heaven, will take deep root and abound. Error and vice are the spontaneous produce of the mental soil, and, if not timely checked and rooted up, will increase a hundred-fold. Such is the usual produce of the untutored mind. But let it be stored early with the sacred seed, let vigilant prudence keep down the tares, and what a harvest of virtues will reward the toil! Warmed by the sun of righteousness, and watered by the showers of grace, it will be as a field *which the Lord hath blessed.* Gentleness, meekness, temperance, faith, hope, and charity will conspire to adorn the character with the beauty of holiness, making their possessor a source of comfort to himself and a blessing to all around him. *Train up a child in the way in which he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

Be assured, moreover, that, besides benefiting the immediate objects of your bounty, you are rendering a beneficial service to the land of your birth. By diffusing the light of knowledge and virtue through the lower orders of the community, you are strengthening the bonds of civil society, and contributing to the peace and happiness of mankind. While you instil the principles of morality into the breasts of these little ones, you do all that is in your power to make them worthy men and worthy citizens; you promote the wealth and add to the strength of your country; for the wealth and strength of a country does not consist so much in the riches and number, as in the industry and virtue of its inhabitants.

But, even if these effects should not follow from your charity, your own reward is, nevertheless, certain; equally certain; and that reward how great! On this point I need not detain you. By attempting a lengthened argument, I could only weaken the striking declarations of your Saviour Jesus Christ. *He took a child*, says the Evangelist St. Mark, *and set him in*

the midst of them, and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me. And again: *Forasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it unto me.* And again: *Those who instruct others unto justice, shall shine like stars to all eternity.*

What, then, shall prevent you from exercising this twice blessed work of mercy which benefits, at once, both those who receive and those who give. I can anticipate but one objection, which may be found in the hardness of the times. In these times, avarice may whisper, in these times, when the rich have but little to spare, and the poor cannot afford to give any thing away, each one must take care of himself, and charity must wait till a more convenient season.

Yet, during darker times than these did the widow of Sarepta speak thus to the prophet? Did the widow of Jerusalem pass by the treasury, because she was poor and weighed down with affliction? No! The one gave willingly the last morsel that she had to a famished stranger; the other, for purposes of charity, parted with her all. The latter was commended, and is now doubtless rewarded by the great Judge of actions, for her benevolence: the means of the former were enlarged, in proportion to her generosity. *Her barrel of meat wasted not, neither did her cruse of oil fail, till the day that God sent rain upon the earth.*

Similar, my brethren, will be your recompense. *Give, and there shall be given unto you. Good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over shall they give into your bosom.* Your bounty shall rebound upon yourselves with a sevenfold increase. Nay, your Saviour has pledged his sacred word, that you shall receive *a hundred times as much now in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting.*

But exhortation, I trust, is not needed. I know, and I rejoice to know, that, amid all the devastations of corruption, the fire of British generosity is not wholly extinguished, and there are yet hearts which can relish the delicious satisfaction of doing good.

To such I now address myself. Again, my Catholic brethren, let me remind you from whom you are descended. Show by your conduct, that you profess the same religion which inspired

in them such laudable exertions. On you, my Protestant brethren, I pretend to no sort of claim. I have to thank you for your attendance and attention this day. I shall ever feel grateful for the kind assistance, which, in this charitable, and, in my circumstances, arduous undertaking, I have already received from several of your body; and the deep sense which I entertain of their kindness will reanimate my efforts—I am sorry to add, my almost solitary efforts, to extinguish animosity, and to promote the kindly feelings of friendship and love among the professors of discordant creeds. Yes, while others labor to keep alive the embers of persecution, by calumniating those who happen to differ from themselves in religious belief, and exciting the hatred of their hearers against the worshippers of the same God, be mine the endeavor to smother, as far as may be, the rising flames, to allay the angry feelings of excitement, and, in obedience to the voice of my conscience, my religion, and my Saviour, to unite Christians of every denomination in the bond of peace and the social interchange of friendly offices. If, my Protestant brethren, there be some among you who entertain similar views, I conceive that, by insuring the stability of the institution for which I am now pleading, you will promote the realization of your own desires.

Indeed, this is one of the principal objects of these schools. They are open to Catholic and Protestant alike; and, at the present moment, the number of the Protestant is equal to that of the Catholic scholars. Educated under the same roof, joining in the same games, growing up, from infancy to manhood, in each other's society, they will naturally contract mutual feelings of confidence and love, and may authorize us in cherishing the hope, that, at no very distant period, they will blush to think, and wonder to learn, that their fathers were foes.

But, my brethren, these and similar incentives to liberality I leave entirely to your own reflections; and, in conclusion, will endeavor to give a right direction to your motives, being convinced, that little, given upon truly Christian motives, will be of greater benefit, not only to the giver, but, with the divine blessing, to the institution also, than a larger sum, given from motives of an inferior or an unworthy character.

There is reason to fear, that, for want of attention to this point, we too often expose ourselves to the mortification of losing

the reward of many of our good, especially of our charitable, actions. We may perform them, merely because there is a decency and propriety in so doing: we may perform them out of vanity, to acquire a reputation for benevolence: we may perform them out of envy, lest a rival should bear away the honor: we may perform them in order to gain popularity and promote our secular interest: we may perform them by way of commutation for a favorite sin, in which we mean to continue, and of which we hope thus to buy off the punishment. In this last point, we shall find ourselves grievously mistaken. In all the rest, the words of our Lord are strictly applicable, *you have your reward.* You sought the praise of men; you obtained it. You sought not the praise of God, you obtained it not.

There is yet another motive, of a more doubtful character: when we perform an act of charity, in order to escape from the pain which we feel at the sight of wretchedness, we relieve the object, but it is to relieve ourselves. We hear much of these fine feelings from persons who reject with disdain the influence of a higher principle. God forbid that we should depreciate this humane and delicate sensibility, which the beneficent Creator has, for the best of purposes, implanted in our hearts. In wisdom he has ordained that felicity should be the daughter of beneficence; that he, who makes his neighbor happy, should be always himself the happier man of the two; that there should be a more heartfelt satisfaction, a more solid comfort, a more lively and lasting joy in bestowing, than in accepting; that, in the words of Christ, it should be more blessed to give than to receive.

That uneasiness which we experience at the sight of another's misery, and that immediate, exquisite, and unalloyed delight, which thrills the soul when, by our intervention, misery has been assuaged, are, without doubt, to the Christian, as well as to those who know not God, useful allurements to the practice of charity. But, where not strengthened by superior motives, this is a casual and precarious instrument of good, and ceases to operate except in the immediate presence and within the audible cry of wretchedness. The true Christian, though his breast is no stranger to sympathetic joy and the pure pleasures of the most delicate sensibility, must be led to act with more sublime views and on a higher principle.

What is this principle of action, which I would propose to

you? What at present and on all occasions should be the motive of your charity? The love of God! Whatever you give, give it in order to please God, and to advance his glory; not to serve yourselves or gratify your feelings. This is the motive which St. Paul so strongly inculcates in his epistle to the Corinthians, as the first source and final aim of every action: the absence of which leaves the most splendid deeds worthless in the divine estimation, and the presence of which ennobles the meanest and insures a reward to the most insignificant. This should be the pure motive of your charity: properly considered, it will be found as powerful as it is pure. God has made us and redeemed us. He has given grace and promised glory. Whatever we have, whatever we are, whatever we hope to be, all comes from him. He asks no other return, but that we love him: and as we can bring no advantage to himself by so doing, he requires that we transfer such love, for his sake, to our brethren; and he places it to his own account. Here, every argument that can be used to excite us to the love of God, is at the same time an excitement to the love of our neighbor; and every kindness, which, under the influence of this motive, we do to our fellow-creatures, is sublimated into the love of God. In these circumstances, if we are backward in testifying our love for them, we cannot be deemed to love him. In the whole compass of our knowledge, there exists not a truth, which, while it speaks so warmly to the human heart, approves itself so completely to the human understanding.

Therefore, in exhorting you to act upon this motive, I think I am consulting the best interests, both of each individual before me, and of the institution itself for which I am pleading. Of each individual; for, however small the amount given, give upon this motive, and you shall *in no wise lose your reward.* Of the institution; for how can it be supposed that you will give sparingly, when you give out of love for Him to whom you are indebted for every thing? To give but little, would argue but little gratitude to that Being from whom you received, and of whom you still hold, every good that you possess, every comfort that you enjoy.

That you may all so use these comforts, as by them to secure eternal happiness, is a blessing, which I earnestly pray God to bestow upon you.

Sermon XXXIX.

Whit Sunday.

THE CHANGES EFFECTED BY THE HOLY GHOST.

I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you for ever, the spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, nor knoweth him: but you shall know him, because he shall abide with you, and shall be in you.—JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

THE two most pernicious effects of sin are, that it darkens the understanding and corrupts the heart. Our first parents had no sooner listened with complacence to the suggestions of temptation, than we discover in their conduct proofs of the awful change which sin had wrought in the two most exalted powers of their souls. Hitherto accustomed to form the sublimest notions of the power and wisdom of their Creator, they now suppose him subject to ignorance and imperfection. *And when they heard the voice of God, they hid themselves from the face of the Lord.* This blindness of their understanding had been preceded by a corruption of their will. The bounds of primeval innocence were no sooner passed, than they felt their hearts throb with new and unusual sensations; a train of conflicting passions took possession of their breasts; and, cursed with the knowledge which they had so dearly bought, they blush at their condition, of which sin had first taught them to feel ashamed.

To oppose this twofold evil, to correct the errors of the human understanding, and rectify the depraved inclinations of the will, was the object of the example, exhortations, and miracles of the Son of God. In the solemnity of this day, whereon is celebrated the last scene in that masterpiece of Divine Wisdom, the redemption of man, we cannot but remark two peculiar effects which the descent of the Holy Ghost produced on

the apostles; the one in enlightening and rectifying their judgments, the other in inflaming and animating their will. To these two effects I now design to direct your attention. I shall do this the more readily, as this is a solemnity possessing the peculiar advantage of witnessing, as often as it is worthily celebrated, a renewal of those sublime gifts and graces in commemoration of which it was established.

Truth is one of the distinctive characteristics of the spirit of God. Our divine Redeemer, on the eve of his passion, when he gave to his apostles the promise of a future Paraclete, designated the divine emissary as the spirit of truth, who was to enlighten their understandings and teach them all things. In conformity with this promise, one of the most remarkable effects produced by the presence of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles was to remove from their minds those erroneous notions which they had hitherto entertained with regard to the sublime truths so often heard, and still so imperfectly understood.

In vain had their divine Master repeatedly declared to them that his kingdom was not of this world; in vain had he instructed them in the science of a spiritual life, and bade them look to sufferings and contempt as the badge of the service in which they had been enrolled. In vain had he, by his own example, endeavored to remove the scandal of the cross, and to bring into a just contempt the glittering and deceptive objects of terrestrial pursuit. Neither the sanctity of his life, nor the splendor of his miracles, neither the ignominy of his passion, nor the glory of his resurrection, had been able to dissipate the charm which deluded their understandings; and they still make the anxious inquiry: *Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom of Israel?* The injunction of going without purse or scrip was a language which they had not yet learned to comprehend. The petition of the sons of Zebedee seems only to have exhibited the sentiments of the rest of the apostles: and their eager contentions for future preference sufficiently demonstrate that to exchange the oar and the net for a temporal sceptre was the summit of their ambition and hopes.

Such, my brethren, were the apostles, unaided and unenlightened by the spirit of truth. Destined by the incarnate wisdom to dispel the darksome clouds of error and superstition

which had so universally overspread a refined and corrupted world, they seem, before the descent of the Holy Ghost, not to have possessed a single qualification that could capacitate them for performing so dignified and arduous a task. But listen to the wonders that are this day displayed, and, if the sequel of the history of the present solemnity be humbling to the proud pretensions of man, let it teach us our incalculable obligations to the spirit of truth, which continues to shed its benign influence on all those who, like the apostles, have, by retirement and prayer, made themselves worthy to be illumined by its rays. No sooner did the divine fire descend upon the eleven, than it consumed all the ties that had bound them to the earth. The veil that had obstructed their view instantly disappeared, and a new vista, that terminated in heaven, burst upon their minds. Then, for the first time, did they behold, in all their beauty, the ravishing splendors of the new Jerusalem. The prophetic allusions of the ancient Patriarchs were divested of their obscurity. The mystic rites and sacrifices of a figurative dispensation were recognised as verified and accomplished. The voice of the Son of God once more vibrated upon their ear: his parables and forgotten instructions were now presented open and undisguised before them. The cross was divested of ignominy, death of its horrors, the world of its delusive charms. Honors and temporal preferments were now no longer the objects of their ambition. Rectifying their judgments by the truth which they had received, they for ever condemn and abandon that false estimate of things which they had hitherto made, and cease to attach any importance to temporal objects beyond what they derive from their relation to eternity. That slowness of belief and dulness of heart, for which they had been so frequently reproved by their divine Master, was now exchanged for a lively, firm, and active faith, which, receiving its light at the radiant source of truth, cheered and illumined the various nations of a benighted world.

Having thus traced this first effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles, let us ask the important question, how far our conduct is marked by this primary characteristic of the Spirit of God. And first of all, allow me to direct your attention to the striking opposition which the spirit of God bears,

in this its leading feature, to the spirit of the world. While the chief object, nay, the very office and essence, of the former is to teach all truth, the whole aim of the latter is to deceive and seduce. *All that is in the world*, says the beloved disciple, *is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* To promise what it can neither possess nor bestow, to captivate by false appearances of happiness, and thus seduce its wretched slaves to attach esteem and importance to objects in their own nature destitute of all stability and value, and to prefer the insignificant and false plaudits of man to the regard and approbation of heaven; to lull its followers into an entire forgetfulness of God and of themselves, by engaging them in a ceaseless round of business or pleasure; such are the arts of a deluded and deluding world. *O ye children of men*, exclaims the royal psalmist, astonished at the blindness of the human understanding, *O ye children of men, how long will you be in love with vanity, and seek after a lie? Vain are the sons of men; the sons of men are liars in their balances, that by vanity they may together deceive.* Hence our divine Redeemer, speaking of the Holy Ghost, the spirit of truth, declares that the world is incapable of receiving him. *Whom the world cannot receive.* If, fellow-christians, the world and its vanities be the idol of your affections, if its maxims and example be the rule of your conduct, its smiles and its frowns the objects of your solicitude, then are your hearts strangers to the spirit of God, the spirit of truth. If, in the estimate which you make of things, you prefer the suggestions of vanity or of pleasure to the dictates of religion, then are you engaged in a blindness still more deplorable than that which darkened the minds of the apostles, when they contended for temporal riches and preferments, as the rewards to be expected from a crucified God. But to help us to discover and rectify the false views which are generally taken of the world's allurements, is not the only effect of the spirit of truth. To display the attractive graces of virtue, to exhibit clearer and more exalted views of the beauty and harmony of the ways of God, to help us to frame sublimer notions of his infinite goodness and love for man, as well as to detect the various snares and multiplied dangers which are so thickly strewn along the path of life; in a word, to guide us to the two most necessary branches

of the science of salvation, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves; these are the gifts which the spirit of God confers upon those with whom he is pleased to dwell. Hence, to form a correct judgment how far we have participated in the gifts of the same divine spirit, it will be of importance to examine how we stand in relation to the eternal truths. Do we regard them with that docility of heart, that zeal and eager affection, which so admirably shone forth in the apostles? Are we penetrated with that lively and animated faith, which forms the character of the true believer? Are we, at the denunciations of the divine judgments, struck with that salutary fear, which is the beginning of true wisdom? Have we that esteem for virtue, that hatred of vice, which the gospel requires and inculcates? Are we acquainted with the particular dangers to which we are exposed from the world, the devil, and ourselves? If, to these interrogatories, our consciences can unhesitatingly and favorably reply, it still remains that, by a life of constancy and fervor, we courageously surmount every difficulty that would retard our progress to perfection, and hinder us from practising the maxims which we profess to hold.

Among the injunctions given by our divine Redeemer to the apostles before his ascension, one of the most remarkable was that by which they were commanded to visit, to instruct, and baptize the various nations of the earth. Had they been less erroneous in their ideas and projects, they still would have found powerful obstacles to the execution of so bold and arduous an undertaking, in the timidity of their minds and the weakness of their resolutions. Fluctuating with the instability of the temporal objects, to which they had attached so undue an importance, they seemed to measure their hopes and their fears, their attachment and their zeal, by the success or adversity that attended their Master. In the moment of prosperity, when the public voice hailed him as the promised Messiah, they thought and declared themselves ready to go with him to prison and to death: yet, no sooner did they behold him in the power of his enemies, than all their vain resolutions and vaunted constancy fell to the ground. Confounded at the dangers that appeared to threaten themselves, they studiously avoided offering him any assistance, or defence, lest such an interference might be deemed

a proof that they had been his disciples. Even when the malice of his enemies had been satiated by his death, still were they terrified to that degree, as to refuse him their last attendance, and to leave to a stranger the pious office of interring their departed Lord. After his resurrection, when with full conviction they acknowledged him as the conqueror of death and hell, human terrors and human considerations still close their mouths. Instead of proclaiming aloud the stupendous miracle, of which they were convinced beyond the possibility of a doubt, they either return in silence to their former occupations, or, in the retired apartment of an upper story, withdraw themselves from the notice and inquiries of men.

And is it, fellow-christians, for such men as these to vanquish and defy the proud lords and potentates of the earth? Is it for them to triumph over the power of kings, the learning of philosophers, the eloquence of orators? Is it for them to demolish the vast fabric of superstition, which ages had cemented? to trample on the idols of paganism, and induce every people, from the rising to the setting sun, to bow down their heads at the name of a crucified man?

Oh, my brethren, the standing miracle of the conversion of a refined and corrupted world, by twelve illiterate individuals of such a character, who preached a doctrine that was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Gentiles foolishness, and who could hold out nothing but dangers, ignominy, and death, as inducements to their proselytes, can only be accounted for by the event which we are this day assembled to commemorate. Inflamed and animated by the presence of their heavenly Guest, the apostles instantly cast aside those vain terrors, which had hitherto so strongly marked their character and influenced their conduct. The contempt, the torments, the dangers, which awaited them, were now become their glory and their gain. Ambitious of suffering in the cause of truth, they rush from their concealment, and in loud accents proclaim the wondrous things of God. Peter, the first of their number, he who, at the voice of a feeble maid, had trembled with apprehension and weakly denied his Master, now boldly standing forth the champion of truth, brought, in two discourses, not less than eight thousand souls to the faith of Christ. No longer to be confined

within the narrow limits of Judea, they boldly partition among themselves, as so many victorious chiefs, the various nations of the earth. Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and barbarians, the rich and the poor, the learned and the ignorant, all equally become the objects of their zeal and labors. *Their sound has gone forth unto all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world.* They daringly sought the most public occasions for proclaiming their belief in the name of Christ. The streets, the temple, the synagogues, the public senate, nay, the very courts and tribunals of their judges, were the theatres which they choose for the announcement of their doctrines. Thus, by that heavenly fortitude, which they this day so copiously received, were the weak and timid apostles enabled to subdue the vices, the passions, and the prejudices of men, to attack and vanquish the combined powers of earth and hell, and to change the cross, which had been hitherto an instrument of punishment and a mark of infamy, into the brightest ornament on the diadem of kings.

To judge how far we have participated with them in the same holy spirit, it will be well for us to consider, what resemblance our conduct bears to that which they exhibited after the divine fire had descended upon them. For think not, my brethren, that there are no longer occasions, on which your courage will be put to the test. True it is, the racks and the prisons of persecution are now no longer to be feared; but then, there are other trials and other attacks, not less severe and frequent, perhaps, even more to be apprehended, because more insidious and more concealed. *Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood,* says St. Paul, *but against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places.* Yes! the open assaults and sanguinary edicts of persecution have ceased. But the malice of hell is not the less alert. The Christian has indeed no longer to fear being dragged like a malefactor to the tribunal of justice for the bare profession of his faith; but then he has to withstand the remarks and the calumnies, the taunts and derisions, which a senseless world will pass on his observance of its precepts. He has not any longer to fear being branded with a public mark of infamy, but he has still to submit, in meekness and resignation, to injuries and misfortunes, to calumnies and affronts. He has not to apprehend that his faith

will be shaken by the promises and flattering solicitations of a pagan judge; but then he has to apprehend the equally insidious invitations of error, and the skeptical insinuations of an impious and falsely termed enlightened age. He does not behold his person surrounded, or his dwelling occupied, by false brethren and informers; but then he ever carries about with him a domestic enemy,—his own corrupt nature and depraved affections.

Oh, my brethren, who can be surprised, that, amid so many obstacles to virtue, the unassisted efforts of man should so often be found ineffectual. Indeed, the misfortune of the far greater part of mankind is, not that they are unacquainted with the value of virtue, and ignorant of the delusions and falsehoods of the world; they know the injunctions of the Deity, and tacitly applaud their observance; but, immersed in temporal cares and solicitudes, and eagerly bent on preserving the opinion and regard of men, they weakly yield in the hour of temptation. What, in fact, do the lives of the majority of Christians present, but endless efforts to compromise the jarring claims of vice and virtue, of heaven and hell, of Christ and the world? What do we behold, but eternal sacrifices of duty and of conscience to human respect, to vanity, or to interest? How often are the suggestions of passion, or the avocations of pleasure and of sin, preferred to the known voice of religion and of God! How often are Christians, though no longer exposed to the stigmatizing brand of persecution, still ashamed of the name and of the cross of Christ! Oh, my brethren, if, on a review of life, your consciences shall plead guilty of such weaknesses, much is it to be feared, that you are yet strangers to that spirit of constancy, which was this day shed upon the apostles. Much is it to be feared, that the recurring solemnity of Pentecost has not been productive of those high advantages, which it is so eminently destined to convey.

Such, then, fellow-christians, being the nature of the benefits conferred by the Holy Ghost, such their efficacy in correcting our judgment and perfecting our will, and such their necessity to guide and support us in the arduous path of salvation, allow me, in conclusion, to suggest the most efficacious means by which they are to be acquired; for, let it be remembered, that

the divine communications of the spirit of truth are only imparted in proportion to the previous dispositions which they find in the soul. The apostles, before they were filled with those sublime gifts, which enabled them to convert an idolatrous world, prepared themselves for the reception of the promised Comforter, by retirement and prayer. In the same manner it is, by retiring from the distractions and dissipations of a sinful world, it is by recalling inward our scattered thoughts, and meditating in secret on the eternal truths, that we also are to prepare ourselves for the reception of this heavenly Guest. Believe me, the soul that is engrossed by worldly solicitudes, the soul that is enslaved to avarice, ambition, or any inordinate attachment, cannot receive the spirit of God. Again, we must, by frequent and earnest prayer, diligently invite the Holy Ghost into the temple of our souls. With a profound sense of our own helplessness, we must, with simplicity of heart, lay before him our multiplied evils and necessities. He is the spirit of wisdom; let us then entreat him to bestow upon us a share of that true light, which alone can guide us through the difficult path of life. He is the spirit of fortitude and of courage; let us, then, beg his supporting aid, in the particular difficulties and temptations to which we are exposed. He, in fine, is the spirit of charity, the spirit of meekness, of patience, of joy; let us, then, beseech him to form in us that perfect love of God and our neighbor, that self-renunciation, and placid conformity to the divine will, which will bring us to the bosom of God in a happy eternity. A blessing, &c.

Sermon XXXV.

Trinity Sunday.

ON TRINITY SUNDAY.

Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—MATT. xxviii. 19.

THE solemnities of the Church have conducted us from the preaching of the precursor to the birth-place of the Messiah. Hence we have followed our Lord in his private and public life. We have seen him a model of obedience to his Virgin Mother and his reputed father: we have seen him exact in his compliance with the duties of religion; undergoing the painful ceremony of circumcision; punctual in his attendance at the temple; in one word, increasing in wisdom and favor with God and man. Besides the virtues of his private character, our Lord's divine mission has been attested by the predictions of the prophets, by the multitudes of the heavenly host, by the acknowledgment of the Magi, by the manifestation of extraordinary wisdom in the temple, by the sublimity of his preaching, by the wonders of his power. We have seen him die, as he had foretold; we have seen him arise again on the third day. When he had spent forty days in confirming the faith of his disciples, and teaching them the manner of propagating his kingdom, he ascended to the throne of his glory, but not without giving assurance of another Comforter, and a promise of his own superintendence. The Church has, also, set before us the accomplishment of our Lord's engagement, in the descent of the Holy Spirit.

On this day, we are summoned to give credit to the first, the

grand mystery of our Lord's teaching, the mystery of the most Holy Trinity. But here, in the very outset, I am at a loss. Viewing, on one side, the incomprehensible depth of the divine nature, and on the other, the shallow capacity of the human understanding, I am compelled to exclaim, with the prophet: *O Lord, I am a child, and know not how to speak.* The philosopher of old, being requested to speak of the nature of God, was so lost in the infinitude of the Godhead, that, the more time he gave to the contemplation, the more was he convinced that unaided reason knew nothing. This ancient sage ingenuously acknowledged his ignorance. But not thus modern philosophy: less sensible of its incompetence, and, hence more rash in its pretensions, it impiously measures the immensity of the Supreme Being in the limited capacity of reason. Not more vain were the attempt of infant simplicity, to lade the mighty ocean into a cavity in the strand, than the attempt of human littleness to comprehend the unfathomable ocean of the Divinity. As well might imbecility light a taper to inspect immeasurable space, as Philosophy use the glimmering of reason to scrutinize the unbounded Godhead. True Philosophy acknowledges her insufficiency. The office of reason is to investigate the evidences of revelation, to examine whether God has spoken, but not to dispute his word. That God has spoken, is manifest from the accomplishment of numberless prophecies, and the authority of countless miracles. These truths are a matter of *testimony*, and this *testimony* is given by the most *numerous* and the most *illustrious society*, consisting of all nations, of all professions, of all ages. In the most important of human investigations, in a trial, on the result of which depend the fortunes and lives of our fellow-men, the testimony of a few credible witnesses is deemed satisfactory evidence. And when we behold a fellow-creature deprived of life for alleged offences, we inquire not, whether the judge and jury were eye-witnesses of the facts on which the condemnation rests; but we are persuaded that the evidence was complete, on being informed that many credible eye-witnesses gave testimony in the court. Consistent action will apply this just rule to the facts on which revelation is based. Credible eye-witnesses to these facts published them to the world; their verbal and written depositions have been

handed down to us, by credible persons of all nations and of all ages. Hence, these depositions cannot be invalidated, without invalidating all evidence in every court of justice, and thus subverting all social order, and reducing authentic history to a level with fabulous legends. Whence of necessity must follow, that no certainty could exist without personal inspection. Hence, again, no one could be certain of the existence of any person whom he had not seen, of any country which he had not visited.

My brethren, you smile at these absurdities: yet, remember, that the most admired historian of our own country, the great philosopher of modern days, in order to destroy the evidence of Christ's resurrection, unhesitatingly plunged into these absurdities: for one of his principles is, "that we can never be certain of the existence of any thing, of which we have not personal evidence." Away, then, with this unphilosophical philosophy.

Led by genuine reason to the sanctuary of God, let us hear, with docility, what the truth of God is pleased to reveal; nor let us be surprised if we hear what reason fails to comprehend: for the unsearchable Godhead is the subject of instruction, of which true philosophy acknowledges that she can know *only* what he himself is pleased to reveal.

However difficult to human reason, to heaven-born faith the lesson is simple. Revelation teaches that in one God there exists three distinct persons,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Though impossible to be comprehended, this mystery is easy to be believed, when we once acknowledge the authority which teaches. For the authority of revelation being granted to be divine, whatever it teaches must of necessity be true. Now this authority, as I have before shown, rests upon public facts, which cannot be impugned without admitting principles which destroy evidence and overturn society.

The mystery of the most holy Trinity is the first article of our creed, and the others are but the manifestation of the external attributes of the three Divine Persons, and exhibit to us the bounty, wisdom, and justice of God three-in-one. If only the Son took flesh, if only the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles, these acts of divine liberality are attributable to the

united counsels of the three Divine Persons; hence our gratitude is due to all the Divine Persons equally.

The mystery of the blessed Trinity is the end of all other mysteries; because, in their last result, they all tend to the glory of the triune God! Every festival kept throughout the year, is a festival in honor of the Trinity; yet the Church cannot but appoint one day for the drawing of our attention in a more especial manner to this most holy mystery. Invited, then, by the recurrence of the festival, let us bow down, with more than usual attention and fervor, to adore the majesty of God;—the very Being of Beings, self-existent, and boundless in perfections. This is *He* in whose praise the angels delight to attune their golden harps. This is *He*, before whose crystal throne the kingly elders uncover their venerable brows, and bend in solemn worship, while the cherubim with golden censers perfume the hallowed court, and holy spirits, enraptured at the glorious presence, peal their harmonious strains, till, lost in wonder, their joyous exultation melts into the solemn cadence, Holy, Holy, Holy. They veil their faces; for the majesty of God is too much for angels steadfastly to gaze upon, till the unspeakable benignity of God gives them confidence. With what ecstasies do they reflect that this immensity is the grandeur of their own eternal Father, and that his eternal presence is their eternal reward! This is but a faint sketch of the holy city: for no power of human words can express, no soaring of human fancy can conceive, its rapturous delights.

Could we, but one moment, be witnesses of that eternal festival, how would the grandeur of this little world dwindle into its own contemptibleness. And yet this inconceivable splendor is our own. *For we are no longer guests and strangers, but citizens of the saints and domestics of God.* Let us, then, commence, here in the house of God, that hymn of praise which we may sing to all eternity in heaven. Let us show our faith in our lives. Let us always remember, *that faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself,* and *that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.* Belief in the existence of God the Creator and Sovereign Lord of all things, who, forming us to his own image, has rendered us capable of the eternal enjoyment of himself, should inspire love, gratitude, and adoration. But are we

all punctual in the discharge of these duties? Is the worship of God generally attended to as the first of man's obligations, and regarded as the choicest pleasure in which he can indulge, as the highest honor to which he can aspire? Many, I fear, will feel that it is not. Many, I apprehend, there are, who, waking from their slumbers, enter forthwith upon their daily avocations, and blush not to acknowledge that they cannot find time to pray or to think of God in the morning. The day passes in the bustle of worldly affairs, and evening finds them too tired to perform their devotions, in any but a hurried, imperfect manner, if at all; and they repose on their pillows with their thoughts occupied upon projects for the next day; as if time were their own; as if they had no God to serve, no soul to save. Had the Almighty abandoned us to our feelings of gratitude, had he not powerfully engaged our interest in his cause, this neglect would appear the less unaccountable. But God would not leave us to the guidance of a mind that was perverted, of a heart that was corrupt, and of an understanding clouded by ignorance, and governed by fancy, prejudice, and passion. He has graciously revealed to us the way in which he would be worshipped. After explaining that he is one in essence and three in person, he has taught us how each Divine Person co-operates for the benefit of man—the Father in our creation, the Son in our redemption, the Holy Ghost in our sanctification. He has given us a law, which is, like himself, one, immutable, holy; and, to convince us of its divine origin, he has sent from heaven his only Son, who, having imbodied this law in his maxims, and exemplified it in his life, yields himself up to a cruel and a disgraceful death, that, redeemed by his blood, we may live for ever in honor and felicity. While docility and obedience secure these blessings, disobedience is threatened with eternal wo. Yet the bulk of Christians appear to be insensible of the stupendous miracles of condescending love by which their salvation was purchased. While the adorable Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—and all the bright orders of angelic spirits interest themselves in man's fate, man himself remains unconcerned, and addicted to vices that would seem to be quite incompatible with a belief in these wonders.

Can we believe the reality of future torments, and commit the deeds for which those torments will be inflicted? Can we believe in the eternity of future rewards, and neglect that law by obeying which those rewards may be merited? To the abstract reasoner it must seem impossible. But, compare for a moment the life with the faith of Christians. Faith teaches us to undervalue earthly things, and to have our conversation continually in heaven. Judging from the Christian's life, we should conclude that this world contained all that could excite the interest of man: few are his aspirations after his true country, and those few are made only or principally when he reflects that death must one day separate him from every thing on which he is accustomed to repose his affections. Faith directs him to avoid sin: what sin is there in which he does not indulge? Lying, drunkenness, cursing, sensuality, and every vice that can impair the image of God within him, are recklessly practised. Faith teaches the Christian to aspire to virtue. At what virtue does he perseveringly aim? Is he humble? Is he meek? Is he charitable? Is he mortified? Is he just to his neighbors? Is he modest? Faith instructs him how he may effect the purification of his soul from sin. Does he frequently resort to that means of purity, or does he not rather remain for weeks, months, or perhaps years, buried in vice, the enemy of that sovereign Good whom faith teaches him to love? Faith instructs, that, in the mystery of the holy eucharist he will find that spiritual food which will support him through his dreary and dangerous pilgrimage. Does he seek that comfort of the soul with ardor? Is he a frequent communicant? Does he covet the bread of life? Or does he not rather content himself with approaching once in the year, that he may not be excluded from the pale of the Church?

How ungenerous, how ungrateful, how unwise, how perilous is such conduct! *The just man liveth by faith.* His every action is modelled by his belief. Penetrating the mysterious veil that screens the future world from corporal view, he, with the eye of faith, contemplates the heavenly Sion, and there discovers all that can inspire his hope and enkindle his charity. Hence he learns the real dignity of his nature: he uses the

things of this world as if he used them not; he loathes sin as much as he abhors the misery to which it would lead. Not content with avoiding what would entail everlasting wo, having learned to love God, he casts off his slavishness of fear, and, with that fear which humility inspires, strives to please the object of his love by the practice of every virtue. Heaven and its joys brighten to his ardent hope, and he longs for the day when faith shall be exchanged for reality, and when the crown which awaits those who have kept the faith and finished their course shall be given him by the just Judge.

Sermon XXXV.

Second Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE SACRAMENTS.

You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains.—Isaias xii. 3.

As, of old, it pleased the Almighty wisdom to cheer the barrenness of the desert with the refreshing streams, miraculously issuing from the rock, it hath pleased the same supreme Ruler, to refresh the wilderness of *our* pilgrimage with seven fountains of living waters, poured from the rock of his Church. The prophet, lifting the veil of futurity, descried the salutary springs, and exclaimed in rapture, *You shall draw waters with joy out of the fountains of the Saviour.* Transported at the joyous vision, he antidates futurity, and exclaims: *All you that thirst, come to the waters; and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat; come ye, buy wine and milk, without money and without any price. Why spend you money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which doth not satisfy you?* The holy enthusiasm of the prophet proclaims the fountains of the Saviour to be nourishing as milk, generous as wine. What Isaias exulted to predict, we are indifferent to behold! Whence this torpid apathy? The cause is obvious. The prophet's ardor was liveliness of faith, our indifference is dulness of belief. Faith, says the Scripture, is *the evidence of things unseen.* If we possessed but a portion of the prophet's faith, the mystic operations of grace would afford our minds evidence so clear, that the possibility of indifference would be precluded. But the prevalent incredulity of carnal minds would fain regret whatever partakes not of material tangibility. Faith and vision are incompatible. If we see, our belief rests not upon God's truth,

but upon the testimony of sense. If seeing were divine faith, faith were not *the evidence of things unseen. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.* Hence, it is pride to reject the sacraments, on the ground, that human intellect is inadequate to the comprehension of their mysterious operation. Will incredulity assert, that the ways of God are not above the ways of man?

But, why this argumentation? I am addressing those who admit that Christ established a church, which he commissioned to teach all nations, promising to teach her all truth, and declaring, that he, who would not hear the church, should be accounted as a heathen or a publican. It suffices to know, that this church teaches the existence of seven sacraments. We believe without further investigation: still, in conformity with the advice of the apostle, let us be ready to give a reason for the faith which is in us.

And let not incredulity insinuate, that, to support our tenets, we have recourse to subtility. No; we give the plainest, the strongest reason, why we believe, namely, our reliance on the promises of Christ. And if we are induced to adopt the refinement of argument, we employ this method, by *compulsion*, to meet the subtle objections of infidelity. Such are the doctrines of the Catholic Church, that unlettered simplicity may therewith readily acquire a competent acquaintance; while profound philosophy finds them every way mysterious. Thus a strict analogy exists between the physical and the moral creation. For, in both, the illiterate and the simple have knowledge sufficient for their condition; while the learned and the sage meet a mystery in every reflection. Mysterious indeed are the doctrines of God, and equally mysterious are his works. If mystery be alleged as the cause of rejection, consistency must reject the material world, and the result is the egregious folly of universal skepticism.

St. Austin, writing against Faustus, remarks, that *Man can be united in no religious denomination, true or false, unless they be bound together by some intercourse of visible signs or sacraments.* Experience has proved the accuracy of this assertion. No sooner were the sacraments impugned and rejected, than the bonds of union were severed, and denominations became as

various as the conceits and caprices of men. As contrariety of doctrine followed the rejection of the sacraments, their renunciation was the forerunner of falsehood; unless, forsooth, discordance of doctrine be consistent with truth.

To inquire, why God hath ordained that the immortal spirit should receive his grace through the instrumentality of less dignified elements, is a speculation as useless, as to investigate the Divine economy, in allotting the inanimate productions of nature for the sustenance of this body, destined to immortality and unbounded felicity. But, behold, even here we can furnish a reply quite as reasonable as the inquiry. As man disregarded the dictates of reason to gratify a sensual appetite, he merited subjection to the less dignified creatures of earth. Thus is humbled that pride which prompted the first disobedience.

The first sin so vitiated the will, so enfeebled the understanding, so debased the faculties, that the mind is incapable of comprehending what is purely spiritual, without the intervention of something more material, more tangible, more subject to the senses. As wisdom requires, that the rude and untutored should be initiated into science, by comparing what is unknown with what is known; so was it manifest wisdom in God, to introduce men to celestial things, by the intervention of earthly elements, with which they are more conversant. The history of the world evinces, that human intellect, however debased and obscured, never permanently and entirely lost sight of the majesty of God, which blazes throughout creation. Though the mental vision be impaired, the splendor of Divinity will act upon the vitiated organ, pouring sufficient light for the evidence of its own existence. The mind sensible of the existence of a Sovereign Ruler, naturally seeks to pay both internal and *external* homage. Hence, where authorized externals are unknown, the natural worship of the heart institutes unauthorized ceremonies, which are the very essence of superstition. Thus, however paradoxical it appears to prejudice, faith recognises in the sacraments and ceremonies of the Christian Church the prevention of superstition: because they afford that external expression of religious feeling, which the devotion of the heart naturally seeks.

To demand a reason, why our Lord should institute a *variety*

of channels for the spiritual irrigation of his vineyard, is as frivolous and impertinent, as to question the propriety of creating a diversity of fruits for corporal nutrition. When we behold the varied productions of this earth, and taste the nectared fruits of autumn, do we not learn to exclaim, with the Psalmist: *Thou hast made all things in wisdom and bounty.* In *wisdom;* because this variety of delicacies teaches, that *heaven* must indeed be superb, if *earth* be thus adorned: and in *bounty;* because, here the bounty of God is manifest, in not allowing even our exile to be devoid of pleasures. Shall then obdurate perversity ask, why God hath created diversity of spiritual gifts, or diversity of channels through which his various graces are derived? Know, then, the reason: God hath made them in wisdom and bounty,—in wisdom, to teach us the manifold operations of grace,—in bounty, to accommodate his blessings to our exigencies. Let us not make the diversified munificence of God the wretched plea for doubting its author. Oh no! that very exuberance of bounty is the great seal of heaven! *We* will say with the prophet: *Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him, and his marvellous works to the sons of men. And let them exalt him in the church of the people and praise him in the chair of the Ancients.*

Sufficient has been said *to give a reason for the faith which is in us.* We boast to be of that Church, which is *the pillar and ground of truth.* We listen to the ministers of Christ, knowing, that he who heareth them heareth Christ. The Church over which the Holy Spirit presides, in which Christ remains to the consummation of the world, declares, that Christ *did* institute seven sacraments; we hear and believe, lest, despising the Church, we despise Christ, and be reputed as heathens and publicans.

Let not your faith lie dormant, but arise into activity. Exercise your faith by frequent meditation on the wonderful exertions of God's bounty. Reflection will induce you to partake of the refreshment prepared for you by indulgent Heaven. Be invited, be solicited, be entreated to listen to the Holy Spirit: *All you that thirst come to the waters,—Come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price.* Prepare but a clean heart, to contain the waters of divine grace, and *ye shall*

draw waters with joy from the fountains of the Saviour. Are you fainting in the desert of your sojournment? behold, from the rock of the Church issues a refreshing fount. Do you feel disheartened with the irksomeness of your pilgrimage? behold, the bread of angels is set before you, the manna that descends from heaven; *not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever.* Reject not the proffered refection. Remember that, *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you.* Day after day, you toil in anxiety and peril, for the meat that perisheth; will you not allot a few moments to the gaining of that food which endureth unto life everlasting? The prophet invites you, *buy and eat;* the Son of God presses you to come, *for now all things are ready.* Come to *the fountains of the Saviour;* come to the nuptial banquet. *This day, if you hear the voice of God, harden not your heart.* If you have strayed with the prodigal son, return to your father's house. You shall be invested with the robe of innocence; your feet shall be protected from the thorns of the world; your hand shall be ornamented with a ring, the emblem of your reunion with Christ; the fatted calf shall crown the festive board; and the angels of God shall be invited to rejoice over one sinner that doth penance.

Hitherto, I have addressed my discourse to those who do not entirely reject the offers of God, who do not entirely neglect the sacraments. I indulge the hope, that I may prove the humble instrument in the hands of God, of exciting them to greater regularity in their duties, to greater fervor in their devotions. I now turn, with less hope of success, to those whose bones are filled with the vices of their youth, who have despised the admonitions of heaven, whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame. They also may partake of the feast, if, washed in the waters of repentance, they put on the wedding garment of innocence. Let them take heed how they despise *this*, perhaps the last invitation.

You are not ignorant that our Lord compares the holy table to a marriage feast, that he sends his servants to them that are invited, saying: *Come to the feast, for now all things are ready.* Some say, I have bought a farm, I am going to see it, I pray thee, hold me excused: others, I have bought oxen, I go to try

them, I pray thee hold me excused: others, I have married a wife, I must remain with her, I pray thee hold *me* excused. And the master of the feast was angry, and said, *Not one of those men shall taste my supper.* Take heed how you neglect the calls, the admonitions of God; lest his anger be enkindled, and on a sudden he destroy you. Hear his words to the obdurate: *Because I called and ye did not attend, you neglected my admonitions, and disregarded my councils, I also will laugh at your destruction, and will mock, when that shall have come upon you which you feared.* Do you expect that you can return to God when you please? He says, that he will come *like a thief in the night.* He says, *You shall seek me and you shall not find me, and you shall die in your sins.* What is it to die in your sins? To die in that state, in which God will say to you, *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.* He offers you a blessing, and you choose a curse; a curse you will have, and it will penetrate the marrow of your bones—it will be boiling oil to your souls unto eternity.

Sermon XXXIX.

Third Sunday after Pentecost.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto Jesus to hear him. And the Pharisees and the Scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you that hath a hundred sheep; and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing: and coming home call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.—LUKE XV. 1–7.

THE interesting and instructive gospel of this Sunday opens with the view of our Divine Redeemer teaching in public, surrounded by an audience of publicans and sinners. In this, as in most other situations of his public life, his conduct is at variance with all our ideas and expectations. Judging by our own feelings and prejudices, we should have expected to find him very differently attended. We naturally recoil from the presence of the depraved; partly from an inbred abhorrence of what is evil, but much more, in general, from pride, since we are often, perhaps, less innocent in the sight of God. We cannot suffer the company of the sinner and the publican, even when our exertions might perhaps recall them to virtue. In conformity with this feeling, the sages of paganism were never seen surrounded by such an audience; they were careful to exclude all such from their schools; they would have considered themselves dishonored by their presence. And they were right; as men, they calculated justly: they were weak and ineffectual

teachers: their feeble and frigid lessons might please the ear, but could not reach or cure the heart: their reputation depended on their audience, and the scholar was often no less necessary to the master, than the master to the scholar. But our Divine Teacher, who stood in need of no one, and who came to heal and to save mankind, follows a very different conduct. He not only throws open his sacred school at large to every hearer, but seems to delight in an audience of publicans and sinners: he himself indirectly tells us so, in the parable which follows. He admits them with the utmost facility; he invites them with affability; he suppresses all that feeling of natural antipathy, which sanctity, and particularly such sanctity, must ever experience in the presence of vice; he addresses himself to them, and doubtless listens to them in turn, and answers their various interrogations. He even descends, as we find from the complaints of the Pharisees, to the familiarity of associating and eating with them.

Such was his conduct;—*the Pharisees and scribes murmured at it.* In this they were actuated, in the first place, by that pride which I have alluded to as so general and so prominent a principle in the human character, and which, on these occasions, is so apt to break forth; but they were also instigated by jealousy and envy, those black and baneful passions, to which they had already given entrance into their hearts, and which subsequently hurried them into the most enormous of all crimes. Their malignant eyes could not bear the lustre of his superior sanctity; they could not endure the sight of a virtue to which they found themselves evidently unequal; and they therefore broke out into complaints and murmurs, cloaking their evil inclinations under the semblance of a zeal for religion and public decorum. Such is generally the reward of conspicuous and transcendent goodness; whoever purposes to do good on a large and public scale must not expect to do it in peace. He must consider himself as a mark, and look out for the arrows of contradiction and censure, which will assuredly assail him from one quarter or another, either from the malice or the narrow-mindedness of men; for, among mankind, there are ever some minds so contracted as not to credit that virtue which they do not recognise within themselves, and some so perverse as to view it only with disgust.

Let us now attend to the manner in which our Saviour repels these attacks on his public conduct. Instead of returning complaint for complaint, and censure for censure, he introduces, as an answer, his celebrated and beautiful apologue of the shepherd and his lost sheep, containing at the same time the most effective reply to their unjust censures, and a most touching moral picture. This trait of divinity, this combination of various views in one action, we shall find in most of his contests with his enemies. Thus, when they thought to surprise him on the nice question of paying tribute to Cæsar, while apparently only intent on his own reply, he dictates to us that most valuable and capital lesson of morality, conveyed in his well-known words: *Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and unto God the things which are God's.*

Leaving, then, the blind Pharisees to their own perversity and malice, let us now attend only to the instructive picture, here so briefly but divinely sketched for us by our great Master, in which it is well known he secretly meant to portray himself and his own merciful dealings with sinners. *And he spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he have lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it?* Thus does this divine Shepherd of our souls, whose attentive eye is ever directed to all and every one of his spiritual flock, no sooner detect any unhappy individual straying from it than he instantly sets out in its pursuit. *He leaves the ninety-nine in the desert*—that is, he is as intent on the recovery of this unfortunate wanderer as if this were his only care, and as if he had for a time abandoned the rest. *He goes after it*—that is, he pursues it with his lights and graces, first with instant remorse, then with the view of his judgments, next with the hopes of his mercy, and lastly with the strong calls and solicitations of his grace: *He goes after it until he finds it.* If this part of the parable is not always realized in this life, it is not certainly from any want on the part of God. This pursuit of divine grace, this series of inspirations, and lights, and calls, is real; and ever going on in the spiritual kingdom of Christ; if we do not observe it, it is because it belongs to the spiritual world, which is not an object of our discernment now. It will then be deve-

loped to us, and all its hidden operations displayed when God shall manifest the secrets of consciences at the last day; we shall then see and be satisfied that of all the sinners whom we see crowding to hell, not one arrived there without internal molestation, and that he had to break his way through threats and allurements. *And when he hath found it, he layeth it upon his shoulders with joy.* This beautiful circumstance finely paints to us the infinite condescension of God to repenting sinners. He compassionates their weakness; he lifts them from the ground, as it were, and carries them smoothly and sweetly over the little difficulties of the new road on which they have entered. All is peace and joy to them; they have done nothing; they have merely listened to the voice of their divine pursuer, and suffered themselves to be arrested by him in their career; and, behold! they are put in possession, at once, of the fruits of innocence and virtue. Their pains cease; they overflow with consolation, and are forced to acknowledge that the joy of that single moment infinitely surpasses all the joys of sin. The divine Shepherd himself is all joy on the occasion; he knows no other sentiment; as if he had not been a thousand times rejected, slighted, and scorned;—he forgets all this, and, making the happiness of his lost sheep entirely his own, he, *coming home, calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep which was lost.* Oh! infinitely amiable Shepherd of our souls, who can remain insensible to this thy amazing tenderness? What sinner, reflecting that this picture of his own goodness is drawn by God himself, and that it is drawn on purpose to encourage and invite him, can possibly demur, and not instantly throw himself into the arms of his Saviour? The concluding sentence of this parable is singularly remarkable: *I say to you, that even so there shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety-nine just.* Extraordinary as this sentence may appear, we even on earth experience and bear witness to its justness. We never prize what we possess so much, as when we have been on the point of losing it; we never feel the joy of health, as we do when we have just recovered it from sickness; we never cling to life with such transport, as when we have just snatched it from sudden danger, and can look smiling over the precipice

which we have escaped; nor is there in life itself any ecstasy that can compare with that of a parent, who, after a fruitless search and years of anxiety, and toil, and despair, unexpectedly embraces again the child whom she has lost. The pain of loss may be great; but the joy of recovery amply repays it. Whether it be that the previous pain enhances the succeeding pleasure, or that the novelty and surprise of the new situation gives it a double relish, there is, in the joy of recovery, a richness and a fulness which undisturbed and tranquil enjoyment can never know. Hence it is that in heaven itself the repentance of the sinner excites so great a sensation; the blessed seem to suspend, or forget for a time, their satisfaction over the just and the holy, and to concentrate all their joy over the spectacle of the returning sinner: and God himself, as we may conclude from the parable of this day, sanctions and partakes in their rejoicings. What an encouragement to the sinner! and how many has this single sentence won over to conversion!

From the instructive gospel this day, then, let us learn two important lessons: 1. An exalted idea of the infinite goodness, and a most unbounded confidence in the mercy of God. We see evidently, from the whole series of revealed truth, that he is much more delighted with the homage paid to his goodness than with that paid to his justice; and it is one of the most certain, while it is one of the most consoling, of spiritual maxims, that God never will, and never can, let go his hold of that sinner who clings closely to the arm of his goodness. No one ever hoped in him and was confounded. The time will probably yet come in life when we shall stand in need of all the support of this maxim. 2. A tender compassion and most ardent charity for sinners. Let no one flatter himself that he loves God, however great may be the sensibility of his devotion, if he does not experience in his breast something of this heavenly principle. We, in particular, my friends, who are associated in the godlike office of saving souls, must deeply imbibe this heavenly feeling; it must be our characteristic virtue. Devotion may distinguish the contemplative, but zeal for souls must mark the apostle. He must watch and eagerly seize every favorable occasion; he must be ready and prompt to undergo every labor and danger, and even sacrifice his own life, if necessary, in the glo-

rious cause; a thousand and a thousand times happy, if he can but snatch one immortal soul from destruction, and restore her to God and to eternal life.

These lessons may be deemed, and, if learned and reduced to practice, would really be sufficient for the day; but as the good Shepherd is a character under which our Saviour has been pleased frequently to represent himself, let us proceed to consider how completely he has fulfilled in our regard all its requisites.

One of the first duties of a good shepherd is to know his flock, and to distinguish its different individuals; a task apparently of some difficulty, but in which time and practice give him a surprising expertness. This, however, is commonly the amount of his knowledge in their regard. The spiritual flock is infinitely more extensive. All over the wide-spread fold of his Church, the great Pastor discerns at once those who are his only in name, and those who are his in reality; that is, those who are in the state of sin, and those who are in the state of grace. He knows and distinguishes the tepid and the fervent,—those whose first and greatest affair is their salvation, and those to whom it is the last and the least,—those who love and earnestly desire to love God, and those who are unhappily engaged in loving any thing else. All these distinctions, which everywhere prevail, and therefore but too probably have place also in this assembly, are as clear and familiar to his all-seeing eye as the most ordinary objects to our natural vision. He moreover sees and reads in every individual soul every particular; each one's predominant passion, each one's proportionate graces, the efforts which he makes, the efforts which he neglects to make; what that secret difficulty is, which, once removed, would clear and expedite his road to perfection; what that little, but essential sacrifice is, so often required, but so long withheld, which, once generously made, would insure the rich gift of divine love, and, with it, all the treasures of heaven. All this he sees in secret, though he does not manifest it; he will give us proof of this knowledge on that day when he shall become visible to all, and make the public and eternal distinction between the sheep and the goats.

Another great duty of the shepherd is to guard his flock; in

which the peculiar circumstances of the pastoral life expose him to a great variety of fatigues, hardships, and dangers. He must endure heat and cold, wind and rain; he must sacrifice his rest; he must risk his life in the preservation of his flock. It were easy to show what an advantageous parallel, in all these particulars, the Saviour of our souls has established in his own person. Here, however, the comparison stops; if the shepherd risks his life in defence of his flock, it is seldom heard that he loses it, and never, that he deliberately and spontaneously sacrifices it. All this however, the divine Shepherd of our souls, we well know, has done; he has actually laid down his life, as he himself tells us, freely and willingly, for all and every one of his sheep. We were all lost and gone astray, and had become the prey of the infernal wolf; his life was demanded as the price of our rescue, and that high price, though we were of no importance to him, he has generously paid for us. How immense are our obligations to so generous a Master! how insensible must we be, if we neither feel nor manifest any gratitude for such gratuitous goodness!

The third duty of the good shepherd is to feed his flock, to provide them with abundant pasture, and to lead them to it. How completely here, also, has our Redeemer showed himself the good Shepherd of our souls! How abundant is the spiritual food which he has provided, for you especially, who have at your command so many good books; who can so frequently hear the word of God, so easily assist at the divine service, and avail yourselves of its invaluable blessings: whom he visits with so many daily graces, internal admonitions, secret calls, spiritual consolations, besides the public channels of his sacraments, which flow so copiously and so freely for you! Remember, that but for these resources and their constant supply, you would no more possess spiritual life, than you would corporal life without material food, and that, at this very moment, there are thousands who, in the just judgments of God, are left utterly destitute of them. Remark a singular difference and exception, here, again, in the parallel between our Saviour and the ordinary shepherd. The latter, while he feeds his flock, is in the end fed and clothed by them; and this, in fact, is the only object of his mercenary care. Instead of any thing like this, our divine Shepherd gives

us, truly and literally, his own flesh to eat, in a wonderful manner; we all feed upon him, and there is not the meanest or obscurest of his flock, that may not freely and at his pleasure possess himself of all the rich treasures of his divine person. Thus we see that the figurative language here used by our divine Redeemer, is not, like other metaphorical language, only vague and general in its adoption, but is profoundly and literally true, and, in the depth of its meaning, goes far beyond the terms in which it is couched.

Let us now briefly consider, on the other hand, what is required of the flock, in regard of their shepherd; for their duties may be said to be reciprocal. *I know my sheep,* says our Saviour, *and mine know me.* It is the duty, then, of the sheep to know their shepherd. Do you know your Saviour? In faith, thank God, you do; you easily discern him from the many hirelings, who, in these days, offer themselves for guides and pastors; but do you know him in charity? Is he truly the supreme pastor of your souls? Or do not other masters rule there?—Again, do you know him in those who represent him on earth, his sacred ministers? do you view in them his image and character, or attend only to the particular character and qualities of the individual, and regulate your esteem and respect by the latter, instead of the former? Do you know him and recognise him in the poor, whom he has left you as his substitutes? or do you not view them with mere human eyes, and overlook that other secret, but real and interesting character, which he has given them in your regard? Whoever can say that they know Christ in these several ways have secured one title to be reckoned among his faithful flock. Their second duty, as our Saviour insinuates, is to *hear his voice and to follow him.* Do you hear the voice of your Saviour? Do you hear him internally inviting you by his secret inspirations, externally calling you by the exhortations of others? In both these ways, he is continually calling you from the world, from your passions, from vain and dangerous pursuits, to follow him. Do you follow him? The way in which he walks is not that of the multitude: it is the narrow path, trodden only by the few and the fervent:—is this the way in which you are walking, or is it the broad and beaten road, in which the multitude are blindly travelling on to per-

dition? The way in which he walks is that of the cross; it is planted with contradictions, self-denials, mortifications, afflictions: no path is more easily discerned:—do you feel these frequent asperities under your feet? If not, you have too much reason to fear that you are in the plain, easy road of the world, and not in that in which your Saviour walks before you with his cross.—There is a third duty of the faithful sheep, not indeed here pointed out by our Saviour, but sufficiently obvious, and that is to resign, with that silence and meekness, for which this animal is so remarkable, both life and property, at the will of the sovereign Pastor. Are you in this disposition? Are you ready at any hour to sacrifice your worldly possessions, when his divine Providence takes them from you by a sudden stroke of adversity? the experience of life must convince you that this is a trial which sometime occurs, and for which, therefore, you ought to be prepared. Are you ready to lay down your life, when his honor or interest requires it? This also may become your situation, and no duty can be more clear and undisputed. If these sacrifices are, during life, rare and extraordinary, in death at least they will become natural and necessary. You must then part with your all, at the will of the sovereign Disposer; you must lay down your life at the command of your great Master. And shall you be able to do it with ease and tranquillity? Only, if you are habitually so disposed, during life; if you spend your days in acquiring in his regard, all the qualities of faithful sheep, in knowing him, hearing his voice, and following his footsteps. Then will the Great Shepherd of your souls, who is invisible in this life, manifest himself to you in his glory, and conduct you to the happy pastures of life eternal.

Sermon XXXVII.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY.

And it came to pass, that when the multitudes pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Genesareth. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them and were washing their nets. And going up into one of the ships that was Simon's, he desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting he taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when he had ceased to speak, he said to Simon; launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering, said to him, Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing; but at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net broke. And they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking. Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying: Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was wholly astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken. And so were also James and John the sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. And Jesus saith to Simon: Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And having brought their ships to land, leaving all things, they followed him.—Luke v. 1–11.

As one of the chief objects of the mission of our divine Redeemer was to rectify our erroneous notions of dignity and honor, he is careful that his actions, as well as his instructions, should tend to this important end. The gospel of this day, which details one of those astonishing exertions of omnipotence, so frequent in the history of the son of God upon earth, opens with a scene as truly characteristic of his humility, as it is repugnant to the ideas which the world entertains of greatness and of power. *When the multitude*, says the sacred text, *pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake*

of Genesareth. And he saw two ships standing by the lake; but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. Here all is humility, all is lowness and simplicity. *He was standing!* no pomp, no dignified chair of state, from which to propose his doctrine. *He was standing by the lake of Genesareth:* far from the haunts of opulence and pride: instead of courting the suffrages of the powerful and the great, he chooses a spot, the residence probably, of the poorest of the inhabitants of Judea, where, to the opulent and the proud it would have been thought demeaning to appear: yet here, surrounded by an obscure but attentive crowd, composed of a few poor fishermen, he opens his divine mouth in the announcement of his heavenly doctrines, and prepares to confirm his words by a most astonishing miracle.

My brethren, the communications of the favors of God are only for the humble. The proud Pharisees and the haughty Herod in vain seek for a sign from heaven. That sign, unsolicited, our humble Redeemer gives to a few poor fishermen on the lake of Genesareth. *And going up into one of the ships, that was Simon's, he desired him to draw back a little from the land. And sitting, he taught the multitudes from the ship.* The minute circumstance of the particular ship, which our divine Redeemer chose to enter on this occasion, was not without design noticed by the evangelist. It was the ship of Peter! By marking this selection, our Lord insinuates the pre-eminence which he was about to confer on this apostle. He sits in the bark of Peter, to show, that he permanently resides in the Church, of which the successor of Peter is the visible head. He teaches the people from it, to denote that here only are to be heard the words of eternal life. *With the chair of Peter,* says St. Jerome, *I am joined in communion, upon that rock I know the Church is built. Whoever eats the lamb out of this house is profane; whoever is not in this ark shall perish in the deluge. Now when he had ceased to speak, he said to Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon, answering, said to him, Master, we have labored all the night, and have taken nothing.* To judge by human appearances, the reflection of Peter, with regard to the probable inutility of

renewing their labors, was obvious and just. Experience had shown him, that night was the time when they were most likely to meet with success. All their efforts since the preceding evening had failed. The spot, where they were, was evidently at that moment the most unfavorable for a new attempt; yet, with an obedience and docility worthy of the first of the apostles, an obedience superior to all human lights and reasonings, he continues, *but at thy word, I will let down the net.*

My brethren, innumerable are the occasions on which the belief and practice of our holy religion will clash with our natural feelings and inclinations, will be grating and repugnant to the pride of our understanding. To give our unhesitating assent to that, which is beyond comprehension; to embrace practices which the world will stigmatize with the name of imbecility and folly, are conditions inseparable from the observance of Christianity. If pride, if flesh and blood, exclaim against the sacrifice, let us, when the occasion occurs, spurn their suggestion, and resolutely say, with the humble disciple, *Lord at thy word I will let down the net.* The benediction of Jesus Christ will amply repay the little sacrifice, which we make of our insignificant will, of our obscure reason. So it was with Peter. *And when they had done this, they enclosed a very great multitude of fishes, and their net broke. And they beckoned to their partners, that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both ships, so that they were almost sinking.* Thus does Jesus Christ repay those who have the happiness to entertain him. Thus does he exert the arm of his omnipotence in favor of the poor, the docile, and the humble. Thus does he tacitly announce the success, with which he was about to bless the labors of Peter and his brethren in the apostleship, when by their hands he was to draw thousands of every nation, tribe, and tongue, into the vessel of his Church. But observe the sentiments of Peter on this memorable occasion.— *Which when Simon Peter saw, he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of fishes which they had taken.* It is no longer by the term "master" that Peter now addresses our divine Redeemer.

Assenting with a firm belief to the truth of his divinity, and overwhelmed with confusion at the view of the astonishing condescension, with which an incarnate God deigned to converse with men and with sinners, and with himself in particular, he breaks forth into that humble and beautiful address: *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.* As if he had said: O Lord God, the Creator and Master of the universe, in whose presence the highest seraph stands with reverential awe, how is it possible, that I, a sinful child of earth, should be honored by thy presence? My heart exults in the contemplation of thy great power and goodness, and willingly would I for ever retain thee as my guest; yet, sunk in the abyss of my own nothingness, I feel and acknowledge myself unworthy of the distinction, which thou hast here conferred upon me. These sentiments of Peter were shared also by his companions. The evangelist continues, *And so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon: Fear not, henceforth thou shalt catch men.*

Such, my brethren, is the explanation of the emblematical prodigy wrought on this occasion, an explanation given by the mouth of truth itself, and verified in the conversion of a pagan world. But if the miracle, which we are considering, be just and striking, in the representation which it gives us of a future event, the moral, which it conveys, is equally beautiful and instructive. Peter and his companions, in the absence of Christ, had labored all night, and had taken nothing, and every presumption was against their success in any new attempt; yet no sooner do they recommence their labors, in the presence and under the guidance of Jesus Christ, than they are instantly rewarded with an abundant draught. Under this beautiful allegory, our divine Redeemer cautions his apostles against attributing to themselves or to their own efforts any portion of the success, which was to attend them in their new vocation: that it was for them to labor, and to cast the net of the gospel, but for him alone to give a blessing to their efforts. Whoever aspires to be a preacher of the gospel of Christ, must above all be called to undertake the awful function at the command and in the company of Jesus Christ. Without him, without his bless-

ing and command, no labors, however arduous, no efforts, however promising, can be crowned with success; with him, no moment is unfavorable, no heart so obdurate, no circumstances so unpropitious, as to authorize despair of a favorable result.

But the moral contained in the miracle, which we are considering, has a still more extensive application. It shows us, that, in our efforts to acquire perfection, Jesus must ever be consulted and invoked, nay, made our guest and companion. *Unless the Lord build the house*, says holy David, *they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keeps it.* Without him, that is to say, if our actions proceed not from his grace invoked by earnest and fervent prayer, however we may flatter ourselves with appearances in our favor, we shall find, when the day of eternity breaks in upon us, that, as Jesus was not with us, we have been laboring all night; and have taken nothing. Without him, the sole fruit of our endeavors will be a mere human edifice, without solidity, without foundation. The first shock of adversity, the first blast of temptation, will scatter it in ruins.

The conclusion of the gospel presents to us an admirable example of disinterested charity. *And having brought their ships to land, they left all, and followed him.* No earthly considerations prevented them from obeying, without delay, the first impulse of divine grace. They quitted their friends, their connections, their property, their hopes, their prospects. True it is, that in quitting their boat and nets and humble occupation, the sacrifice which they made may appear trivial: yet they quitted their all. God, in all our sacrifices, has less regard to the deed which is performed, than to the affection of him who performs it. The mite of the poor widow was an oblation more precious in his eyes than all the rich offerings of the Pharisees. The sacrifice of these first apostles was prompt, it was for ever, without reserve or restriction. *They left all, and followed him.* Do we consider ourselves true disciples of Christ? The very assumption of such a title supposes a disengagement of heart from created objects. *Unless a man renounce all that he possesseth, he cannot be my disciple.* Convinced of this important truth, let us direct all our efforts to subdue every inordinate

affection to creatures and to the perishable toys of this life. God and the world cannot both reign in the same heart. In loving any thing but God, or for his sake, we are loving that, which cannot repay us, and which we must soon abandon. In loving God, we are bestowing our love, where it will be amply repaid, and bestowing it upon an object, which death, so far from taking it away, will only make us more fully possess. And that God may become the sole object of our love on earth, as well as in heaven, is a blessing, &c.

Sermon XXXVIII.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON PRAYER.

The eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and his ears unto their prayers: but the countenance of the Lord against them that do evil things.—1 Peter iii. 12.

That the petitions of the good should be received by God with greater favor than those of the bad, is but reasonable. It can excite no surprise, if the prayers of the obdurately wicked are ineffectual. The only wonder is, that he, who knows himself at enmity with his Maker, and is not resolved upon a speedy reconciliation, should dare to irritate him still further, with the mockery of homage. The prayers of the wilful, hardened, and determined rebel can be but a mockery of that Omnipotent King, to whom he owes, but will not pay, allegiance. Hence, Jeremias laments the sins of his people in these words: *We have done wickedly and provoked thee to wrath, therefore thou art inexorable. Thou hast set a cloud before thee, that our prayer may not pass through.* And Isaias says to sinners: *Your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you.* And the Wise Man declares, *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination.* But only to the perverse and obdurate do these and similar declarations apply. They regard not the humbled sinner, who, sensible of his miseries and touched with remorse, cries aloud for mercy. His prayer will be heard, and the Scriptures abound in the most encouraging assurances to such. *Seek ye the Lord*, says the same Isaias, *while he may be found, call upon him, while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way and the unjust man his thoughts, and*

let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he is bountiful to forgive. The examples of the humble publican, and of the prodigal son, show how ready the Almighty is to listen to the prayers of the greatest sinners, when they throw themselves, in a penitential spirit, upon his mercies.

Having made these remarks, which the text seemed to require, I will proceed to consider the duty of prayer, in a twofold point of view; first, as it regards mankind in general; secondly, in its relation to those who are engaged in the immediate intercourse and bustle of society.

Man is a dependent being. He comes into life helpless and destitute, ignorant of the past and the future, and unable to alter the lot which, without his concurrence, has been assigned him. Instantly a thousand dangers spring up around him, and attend him through life. The miseries and instability inseparable from the lot of man, the weakness and perils of infancy, the care and misfortunes incident to riper years, the decrepitude of age, are so many admonitions which, at every stage of his existence, remind him of his own insignificance and helplessness. The shortness of his views, the uncertainty attending his fondest projects, his thirst after happiness, and his inability to attain it, whatever, in fine, regards his present condition, whether we consider him as possessed of the goods of life, or as exempted from any of its evils, all things declare the insufficiency of man, and show him the necessity of recurring to some superior power. Hence, to offer supplication to beings of a supernatural order has, in all ages and all nations, even when men have been farthest removed from the light of truth, been found the natural dictate of the human heart. Yet, powerfully as the temporal wants of man force upon him the necessity of prayer, it is only in the view which revelation gives us of his spiritual necessities, that this obligation appears in all its importance.

Created in innocence and destined for felicity, man has by sin enervated all the powers of his soul: he has expelled reason from her throne, and given up his heart to the anarchy of merciless passions, which distract him by the extravagance and contrariety of their demands, and continually divert his mind from the object for which it was made. Blasted by the ruthless in-

fluence of sin, the inferior parts of his nature, his bodily senses, now conspire against him, and by their importunate cravings, cease not to urge him to guilty excess. Around him he beholds the powers of hell, armed with superior strength and sagacity, eagerly bent on his destruction; while, leagued with Satan, the world, that dangerous enemy of virtue, smiles but to delude, and caresses but to destroy.

Such, my brethren, are the spiritual perils, which ceaselessly threaten us, and such the motives, which should induce a rational being to be earnest in seeking the protection of heaven. Yet, strongly calculated as are these reflections to enforce upon all men the duty of prayer, there is another no less powerful motive, regarding, unfortunately, a vast portion of those who have by baptism been numbered among the friends of God, and enrolled among the members of his Church. To the sinner, to him who has wilfully offended his Creator, it were surely vain to enforce the necessity of prayer, by any other consideration than that of an omniscient, just, and irritated God. To him, surely, who has made himself the object of the maledictions of heaven, the prospect of eternal desolation, of the worm that dieth not, and of the fire that is not extinguished, will offer stronger motives for deprecating the wrath of the Omnipotent, than any which human eloquence can suggest. For whither shall he, who is the enemy of God, look for support or consolation? Shall it be within himself? But a bitter experience has already demonstrated the blindness of his understanding, and the corruption of his heart. Shall it be in the society of those around him? But the world, like himself, stands condemned by heaven. Regardless of his misfortunes, it will see him and pass by; or, perhaps, with compassion more fatal than neglect, it will sear his cankered wounds, and render them incurable. Shall he then flee from the commerce of mankind? Alas, if it be not to commune with heaven, temptation will owerpower his vacant mind, and passion will hurry him to fresh excesses. The spectres of a guilty conscience will haunt his solitude, and the terrifying prospect of a miserable hereafter will disturb his repose, if not hurry him to despair. Thus, as all things threaten an early fall to him who neglects to pray; so, to him who has offended his Creator, all things, without prayer, preclude a return to grace.

For it is a truth coeval with human delinquency, and supported on nothing less than the authority of faith, that all the efforts of man are inadequate to obtain supernatural virtue, without the co-operation of heaven. The purification of the heart is a work to be effected only by the finger of God. To invoke heaven by frequent prayer is, therefore, a duty from which no one is exempted, and which is intimately connected with man's salvation. An entire and final desertion on the part of God can hardly fail of being the lot of that man who long neglects to invoke his aid. The pride of heart, or the obdurate perversity, which such conduct involves, cannot but meet with the severest punishment. And, indeed, it is but just, that he who asks not shall not receive, and that God should complete, in his anger, the separation which man in his impiety has begun.

In thus inculcating the necessity of prayer, I am not ignorant, fellow-christians, that prayer itself is a gift of God; but I also know that, after the first impulse of grace upon the soul, prayer is the ordinary channel for obtaining all other benedictions. By this it is that we are enabled to obtain light in our doubts, strength and comfort in temptations, patience and resignation in distress. By this the good man is aided to persevere in virtue, and the sinner enabled to obtain the grace of pardon and repentance. Thus, possessing universal efficacy, prayer is capable of supplying all the deficiencies of nature: for itself, if neglected, no substitute can be found. How often do men complain of the asperity of the way of virtue? How often do they seek, by vain allegations, to exonerate themselves from the precepts of the gospel, and soften the rigors of a penitential life? But do they ever think of petitioning heaven, in earnest supplication, to remove that love of their own ease which gives to penance all its terrors? Where is the man, who, enslaved to riches, and possessing a heart corroded with the cares and anxities of a dissipating world, ever thinks of earnestly exclaiming, with holy David, *Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not unto avarice. Turn away my eyes, lest they look upon vanity; quicken me in thy law.* Where is the man, who, feeling the energies of his soul paralyzed under the enervating sway of the demon of spiritual sloth, ever thinks of exclaiming, in the prayer

of the same holy penitent?—*My soul hath slumbered through weariness, confirm me in thy words.*

Oh! my brethren, let the zeal and earnestness with which the votaries of the world pursue the momentary advantages by which they are deluded, cover *us* with confusion. Wiser in their generation than the children of light, they toil with ceaseless anxiety for the acquisition of objects destitute alike of stability and value; while we, the candidates for an immortal crown, urged to exertion by the most alluring prospects, and stimulated by the most cheering promises of assistance, still refuse to comply with the easy condition of petitioning heaven for the boon.

Cease, then, to urge the difficulties of virtue, allege not the weakness of nature, or the peculiarity of your situation in life; complain no more of the public or private calamities with which you are visited, as long as you engage not, by prayer, the protection of heaven. It were impious to suppose that you could, alone and unsupported, withstand the assaults of temptation, or cure the diseases of a corrupted heart. Infinite and unrestrained as is the mercy of God, it is only in favor of the humble supplicant that this mercy will be exerted. He that hath said, *narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life*, has only promised to give entrance to him that knocks, and to discover to him that seeks. And as there is not a blessing, which it is in the power of man to ask, or of Providence to bestow, but may be obtained by humble and assiduous prayer; so, to pray is a duty from which no age or condition of life can claim exemption. On whom the obligation is most imperative, will form the next subject for our consideration.

Among the erroneous notions entertained by the world in relation to virtue, one of the most prevalent and pernicious regards the necessity of prayer. By those who are engaged in active occupations, whose hearts are engrossed by the cares of business, the toils of ambition, or the dissipations of vanity, the obligation of frequent prayer is often considered as attached only to the solitary inhabitant of the desert or the cell. Accustomed to follow the false notions which prevail around them, they fondly imagine that the gospel precept of prayer is not to be understood as strictly applicable to them. The remarks that would be made on the singularity of their conduct, were they to

enter on a life of prayer, the want of proper leisure, but, above all, the utter distaste which they find in devotional exercises, are the excuses that aid them in their delusion.

In opposition to this fatal error, the testimony of revelation, of reason, and of experience, alike authorizes me in asserting that prayer is a duty incumbent upon all; and that the only difference between those who are engaged in immediate intercourse with the world, and those who live aloof from its cares, is, that the former are under a more strict obligation of frequently fleeing alone with Jesus to the mountain. For what is the world to the soul of a Christian? What are the objects which it offers to his view, but such as are calculated to wound his virtue?

Its maxims, its examples, its pleasures, all conspire to seduce his heart from the object for which it was made. While the man of retirement meets with few dangers beyond those to which the common corruption of nature exposes him, the man of active life feels his heart assailed on all sides. While the former, by the favor of his situation, is enabled to take a calm and correct survey of the sublime truths of God and eternity, of the vanity and littleness of all things that pass away with time, the latter, ceaselessly borne round in the whirl of pleasure or of business, sees every object in a false point of view. To the man of society, then, to him who daily mixes with the heedless throng, and breathes the contagious air of a dissipating world, emphatically is it said: *Pray, lest you enter into temptation.* To him, above all others, is it of importance frequently to direct his view towards the goal whither he is hastening, that, encouraged and refreshed by the sight, he may contemn the insidious allurements of ambition, of avarice, and of pleasure, by which he is in constant danger of being interrupted in his progress. He, too, stands in the greatest need of a lenitive, on occasion of those sudden bursts of calamity and distress against which the busy part of mankind are in general so little prepared. My brethren, the world but ill knows how to alleviate affliction. You yourselves can testify how vain have been its efforts whenever you have found yourselves the prey of sudden calamity; how little it could do towards lightening the burden that oppressed you; how far it was from removing the furrow which

care had wrought upon your brow. Then were you made sensible of your own indigence and insufficiency; then your heart confessed its dependence, and, in accents not to be mistaken, admonished you to turn to Him who alone can soothe the troubled spirit. And, indeed, how different, in the hour of adversity, is the condition of the man of prayer from him who neglects this holy and consoling exercise! The one, when deserted by the fickle crowds that attend him in prosperity, confidently flees for refuge to the bosom of God, his tried and constant friend;—the other, alone and unconscious of any support beyond that which he derived from the adulation of an inconstant world, gives up his soul to utter desolation. While the former finds in prayer a comfortable resource for his agitated mind, the latter is incapable of any other occupation than despairingly brooding over his misfortunes, or drowning the recollection of them in oblivious excess.

If, then, my brethren, you prefer repose to agitation, hope and comfort to despair, be careful to nourish in your souls a spirit of devotion. Or, if your temporal well-being appear of slight importance, consult at least your eternal interest. The air which you breathe, and the food which you consume, are not more essentially necessary to preserve your corporal existence than prayer is for maintaining the health of the soul. As long as the taste and appetite are strong and undepraved, the fondest hopes, even in a dangerous distemper, may still be entertained; but when all nourishment is refused, when the very support and element of life is loathed and rejected, the appearance of such a symptom becomes alarming indeed. If it be true, that where our treasure is, there our hearts will also be, how is it possible to believe the heart of that man to be fixed and centred in heaven, whose every thought and exertion are directed to the mean objects around him? Can he love God above all things who refuses to direct a thought or a petition to him? Can he be said to hate sin who refuses to adopt the most essential means by which sin is to be avoided?

It is a common error in the world to allege, as an excuse for the neglect of prayer, that the practice of it is irksome. Supposing the objection to rest upon truth,—supposing that the world were an adequate judge of what it cannot experience,

should Christians be deterred from a salutary practice because it is attended with some degree of difficulty? Should a slight inconvenience, originating in the corruption of nature and the perverseness of the heart, be put in competition with the transcendent advantages that are found in devotion? But, my brethren, the testimony of the world in this, as in innumerable other instances, is erroneous. The unanimous declaration of all devout servants of God, in every age and of every condition of life, tends to evidence the consoling truth that, of all the delights of which human nature, in its present state of imperfection, is susceptible, none will admit even of a comparison with those that are to be found in piety. *Taste and see*, exclaims the holy penitent David, in a rapture of admiration, *how sweet is the Lord,—a day in thy courts is above a thousand.* Yes, fellow-christians, the world—yourselves have again and again attested this truth—the world, the vain world, with all its pleasures, leaves your hearts empty and dissatisfied. Try, then, for once, the pleasures of devotion. Dispose your hearts to receive the divine communications; and peace, satisfaction, and happiness will be the reward of your choice. Say not that men will condemn your behaviour, that the world will remark or censure your change. The opinions of men, which now appear of so much weight, will in the very experiment dwindle into insignificance, and the lost caresses of a vain world will be amply compensated by the smile of approving heaven.

Say not that you are withheld from communing with God by the endless distractions and evagations of mind to which you are subject. What can be more unjust than to charge upon prayer the vices of your own hearts? what more pernicious than to object against the application of a remedy, the very disease which it is intended to cure? True it is, that the world and its cares fill you with distractions; but why? because you have given it ingress into your hearts. The only way to avoid its interruptions is frequently to ascend with Jesus into the mountain. There you will learn to defeat its attacks, disregard its caresses, and despise its frowns. The higher you ascend, the more diminutive will appear the terrestrial objects which at present seem of such magnitude. Secure on the tranquil summit, you will behold the clouds of adversity gather beneath your feet,

and the storms of temptation roll harmless below. Thence will you be able to elevate your view even to the throne of God, and thence will you be able to take your flight towards your heavenly country, unimpeded by those obstructions which now confine you to the earth.

Such, then, fellow-christians, being the value and obligation of prayer, let me exhort each of you seriously to revise his conduct. If any one feels his conscience upbraid him with past negligence, or with tepidity in this holy exercise, let me admonish him, as he values his salvation, to hasten to repair the injury which he has done to his Creator and to himself. Had his negligence occasioned only some temporal loss, the utmost diligence would be employed to repair the damage; and shall less attention be considered necessary, now that an eternal injury has been inflicted on the soul? Oh! my brethren, if we cannot emulate the fervor of the Antonies and Serapions, those angels of the desert, who, like their Lord, maintained an uninterrupted intercourse with heaven, let us, at least, consecrate each day by allotting some portions of it to God. Let us, by our fervor and recollection on this weekly festival, repair that dissipation of mind to which our commerce with the world exposes us. Let us, in fine, here upon earth, commence that sweet converse with God, which is to form our perpetual felicity in heaven.

Sermon XXXIX.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost.

CAUSES OF RELAPSE.

Brethren, all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death, that, as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.—ROMANS vi. 3, 4.

ODIOUS as sin is in itself, offensive as it is to God, yet it acquires a considerable accession of deformity, in proportion to the deliberation with which it is committed. The same sin, committed by different persons, may widely vary in the degree of offence, according to their different degrees of advertence respecting the act they perform. Ignorance will sometimes entirely exculpate a transgressor of the law of God. But he, who knows, or ought to be sensible, that the act he performs is sinful, incurs all the guilt, all the malice of the crime. Such a man, in an eminent degree, is he, who relapses into sin after penance. He has prostrated himself before the representative of Christ, has acknowledged himself in humble confession a guilty criminal, and has been impressed with all the enormity of his transgression. The commission of sin, after such a knowledge of its enormity, involves, besides the depravity that is connected with the act, a contempt of God, and a virtual retraction of the sorrow expressed in the confession. Relapse, though thus heinous, is not uncommon; and therefore it may be advantageous to dwell a short time on the examination of the causes whence it originates. These causes may be classed under two heads. The recurrence to the occasions of the first transgression, and the neglect of the means necessary for perseverance in grace. To show the danger of each shall be my present endeavor.

Whatever object, whether external or mental, whether of itself or by reason of its circumstances, conveys to the heart dangerous impressions, is called an occasion of sin. These occasions are various, according to the various dispositions and sensibilities of different persons. What is calculated to induce one man to sin, is not always dangerous to another. Some things, indeed, of their own nature, incline the heart to evil; but, generally, each man must judge from his knowledge of his own dispositions, what, peculiarly, it will be fatal for him to approach. If, with this knowledge, he voluntarily exposes himself to that occasion, is he not answerable for the evil results that arise from it? He, who is indifferent to the placing of a cause, cannot wish to avoid the effect; especially if he has already experienced his own frailty in that occasion. Can he have better hopes of victory in the second, than in the first instance? Not only do the same causes mostly operate on the same persons the same effects, but the human heart becomes weakened by defeat. It has a natural disposition to habituate itself to what once has gratified it. Guilt is consequently more readily incurred a second, than the first time. But, perhaps some will say, "Sin often results from diversions, actions, and company, in themselves most innocent." Whatever it be, that occasions sin, it must be avoided. *If thy right eye*, says our Saviour, *scandalize thee, pluck it out.* And Solomon says: *There is a way that appeareth to man just, and the ends thereof lead unto death.* Satan lurks under specious disguises. His attacks on the heart are not made openly. To show his hideous form would foil his deadly aim. It is in the moments when the soul is off her guard, in the hours of relaxation from business, in convivial hilarity, when the passions are stimulated, and the heart is carried along the tide of dissipation, that he makes the fatal approach. Ever on the alert, and knowing our particular infirmity, he watches the opportunity when we are dallying with the occasions that before were our ruin, to replunge us into vice.

The most innocent enjoyments in life, if they thus lead to spiritual ruin, must be abandoned. The dearest connections, if they interfere with the love of God, must be broken: for, in this respect, those words of Christ are extended to every Christian:

If any one cometh to me, and hateth not father and mother, and wife, and children, and brothers, and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Thus jealous is God of our exclusive adoration. He will not suffer any thing to be for a moment balanced against him. What, though the enjoyments that are a man's ruin be in themselves harmless? What, though the company in which he experiences spiritual detriment be of approved morality? Still are they forbidden to *him.* The dangerous shelves that sleep beneath a milky surface, may be escaped by many; to some they will be fatal; and if the mariner carefully mark the spot, which others' experience has taught him to avoid, how culpable is he whom self-experience has not taught the lesson of caution? Vain are your hopes of escape, vain are your best resolutions, vain is all your circumspection, vain are your petitions for succor, as long as you continue to court those occasions which you know to be dangerous. *He who loves the danger, shall perish in it.* Man adheres very implicitly to this saying of Scripture in what relates to corporal dangers. He, who has been on the verge of the grave, in consequence of some imprudence in trusting too much to the strength of his constitution, seldom fails to make a prudent estimate of his strength, when he becomes convalescent. The horrors of death are cautiously averted at any expense. But the separation of the soul from God is not deemed an object deserving even the retrenchment of superfluous indulgence: the death of the soul has no horrors sufficient to convince Christians of their weakness. Though they are sensible that God is the only object worthy of their love, and though they live constantly in danger of having their love of him impaired by the familiar habit of hearing and seeing him offended; though they have been allured from the love of him, and know by experience the spot where the entangling snare is concealed, they wander again over the fallacious ground:—though still trembling from recent rescue, they hover again within the attractions of the vortex that had swallowed them, and again experience its fatality. *Better were it for them,* says St. Peter, *never to have known the way of justice, than, after knowing it, to turn their back on the holy ordinance that was delivered to them.* Whence can this weakness originate? whence is it that the resolution of not returning to sin and its occasions

is so readily forgotten? From that *neglect of the means* necessary for perseverance in grace, which I have already mentioned, as the second cause of relapse.

In our present condition, the human heart inclines rather to what is depraved than to what is good. It is impossible, therefore, to persevere in rectitude without divine assistance. *In thee shall I be delivered from temptation*, says the psalmist. It is from God we are to expect the graces necessary for perseverance in that pure state in which penance places us. But can we hope for those graces, without using the means to obtain them? God owes nothing to man. He has nevertheless bountifully and gratuitously provided every thing necessary for his salvation. *What is there*, says he by the prophet Isaias, *that I ought to do more for my vineyard, and I have not done it?* Graces, says St. Augustine, could be given to those who do not ask them; but God would have us admonished, by our praying for them, from whom we receive those blessings. Prayer, therefore, is one of the means which we must employ. It is a homage due to him, through whom we are whatever we are. It is an acknowledgment of our dependence on him, and a means by which we cultivate his friendship, and through which we invigorate our frailty. Can man claim an independence of his Creator?—he, who, from the cradle to the grave, of whatever condition he be,—is indebted for existence to others,—lives in mutual dependence on his fellow mortals, subject to a hundred contingencies, and often the slave of one like himself? Such subjection he is compelled to undergo; and shall he say, he stands in no need of his first Author?—of Him, who redeemed him from the bondage of Satan? of Him, at whose pleasure he breathes, by whose permission he moves, by whose supporting hand alone he is prevented from sinking into lifeless clay, and who, at the minute counted by his all-ruling Providence, is to benumb the vital arteries, and to deprive them of their mysterious power? Yet, he, who neglects to pray, does virtually say, that he stands in no need of God. And can he expect God to shower down his graces upon him? The favors of temporal princes are, in great measure, proportionate to the assiduity and services of their courtiers. Absence, or neglect of duty, is followed by privation of honors, and it must

not be thought that God is less jealous of the homage which we owe him. He will withdraw his saving hand from the tepid, and abandon them to the feeble strength on which they presume. Let us then beware of mistaking that calmness of soul which follows a sincere conversion to God, and that internal satisfaction which attends a conscience freed from the load of sin, for a perpetual exemption from the attacks of Satan, or even for a respite from his snares. If we slumber, the enemy of our souls will be wakeful. Nothing exasperates his malice more, than to see his malign intentions foiled by repentance. If we allow ourselves to be lulled into a fatal security, he will seize that favorable moment to regain the habitation from which penance had dislodged him: *I will return into my house, whence I came out.* The practice of virtue admits of no intermission. There is no point whereat to pause. We must either advance, or go back. We must either commit ourselves to the guidance of grace, or become the victims of Satan's delusion. As he is ever vigilant, our endeavors must never be relaxed; and if, after the performance of penance, the self-satisfaction, which such an act tends to produce, arise in the breast, we must not imagine ourselves secure; we must still *watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation.*

But we cannot be always abstracted in prayer. Even that portion of our time which remains on hand, after we have satisfied the claims of business and of friends, will often appear too long to be devoted to that holy exercise. On the manner in which these intervals of leisure are spent much will depend. For the mind, though it is soon fatigued by too intense an application to any single object, yet can never be in a total state of rest. It must exert its activity; and, if not usefully engaged, it will indulge in vain and sinful reveries. Hence idleness has been represented by all moral writers as the source of a multiplicity of spiritual evils. In idle hours our thoughts are sure to turn to what is most congenial to our depravity. It is then the self-destroyer fixes his purpose; it is then the infidel fortifies himself in his irreligion; it is then the debauchee feeds his lustful heart; it is then the revengeful mind works up its anger for the direful deed; it is then, in fine, that every sinful act is projected.

Nothing can prevent such consequences but to keep the mind occupied in something useful. And what more agreeable manner of engaging its attention than spiritual reading? We might, at least, expect that dull leisure which the affluent often experience, and those spare hours which the poorest can frequently call their own, to be appropriated to this necessary exercise. But, alas! even the day appointed by God himself to be kept holy is spent without its practice: the obligations of Sunday are supposed to be complied with after mass has been attended to; whilst the rest of the day is devoted at best to frivolous amusements. Can such dispersion of thought, such neglect of God be suffered without injury to the soul? It is absurd to suppose it.

But the most efficacious means of preserving sanctifying grace in the soul is to frequent the sacraments. The sacraments were instituted for our justification and the maintenance of our spiritual life. When Christ withdrew himself from among us, he would not leave us devoid of the means by which we were to follow him. Aware of the repugnance of human nature to virtue, and of the necessity of an antidote against the deceitful and fatal allurements of the world, whilst he withdrew his corporal presence from us, he chose and promised to be spiritually with us in his sacraments to the end of time. To the sacraments he has attached his graces, and in them has displayed his mercy in the most wonderful and mysterious manner, more particularly in the holy eucharist. In this, what love does he not evince! what bounty! The rest of the sacraments have each some particular end: they confer each a peculiar grace. In this every grace is centred. The Source of grace himself condescends to be the food of man.

And when we consider that, to fortify us against sin and those occasions of sin which so thickly strew the path of mortal life, he has instituted so wonderful a sacrament, has given us his divine body and blood for our spiritual sustenance, and has empowered mortal and sinful man to call him down from his throne of glory, by the utterance of the words of consecration, to be a daily sacrifice under the humble forms of bread and wine; what estimate does not the reflection lead us to make of the enormity of sin which such means were adopted to prevent! of the dangers which such a mystery was established to obviate!

Yet how many Christians fail to approach to this life-giving food? They are contented with the transient glow of fervor which they derive from one or two communions in the year, exposing themselves, in the long interval, to all the obtrusions of Satan, to all the solicitations of the world, and to their own vicious propensities. Since so great a sacrament has been established to counteract sin, ought its use to be so unfrequent whilst sin and its occasions are so common! If a month, nay, a week, or even a day, be sufficient, as experience will attest, considerably to abate the fervor of the heart, can a year elapse without its total extinction? That Christ chose to veil his divinity under the forms of bread and wine, is not without its signification. He would have us to understand from it, that the eucharist was intended for our sustenance, for preserving the soul. As the body is in a constant process of consumption, and needs an unremitting renewal of its nourishing principles, so the soul is constantly debilitated either by the undermining activity of the passions and the incessant provocations of Satan, or by external assaults upon its resolution and fortitude: and if, to protract the short period of human life, unfailing attention to bodily wants be absolutely requisite, how much more is it requisite to furnish the soul with the nutriment that is to give permanency to its spiritual life!

Ye, therefore, who may have relapsed into sin, reflect on your state. Whatever may have occasioned it, endeavor now to repair your fervor and to renew your resolutions. But take care to provide against the cooling of the one, and the failing of the other, by the means which I have suggested; by avoiding dangerous occasions, by spiritual exercises and the sacraments; but more particularly by approaching oftener to that source of all graces, the holy eucharist. It is our daily bread. And, says St. Ambrose, if it be our daily bread, why do you receive it after the lapse of a year? Live so that you may be fit to receive it daily.

Sermon XL.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

THE WAGES OF SIN.

What fruit, therefore, had you then in those things, of which you are now ashamed? For the wages of sin is death.—Rom. vi. 21, 23.

Among the innumerable motives, which ought to induce us to reject, with indignation, the forbidden pleasure offered us, when we are tempted to sin, one is the consideration that we cannot possibly derive from it any real advantage, and that sooner or later it must be followed by bitter repentance. This motive is so obvious to reason, even unaided by revelation, that the pagans themselves made use of it as a restraint upon their passions. Socrates, being invited to purchase an infamous pleasure by a sum of money, replied: "No! I will not purchase repentance at so dear a rate." Would to God, that the generality of Christians equalled in wisdom this benighted pagan. Would to God, that, in all temptations, they would turn round on their spiritual seducers, and make the same reply. No! I will not purchase repentance at such a rate: I will not barter away real for apparent happiness, everlasting joys for the pleasure of a moment: I will not do that, which I shall infallibly, one day, wish not to have done.

In order to impress this consideration more deeply on your minds, I will briefly contrast the condition of the man who has yielded in the time of temptation, with that of him who has vigorously resisted, and thus has obtained a victory over the devil and his own passions.

Pleasure is the lure held out to us always, when we are

tempted to sin: these are the wages by which our spiritual enemies endeavor to engage us in their service. But the apostle assures us, that these wages *are death*. In the first place, his meaning is, that all forbidden pleasures essentially cease the moment they are enjoyed; like those unfortunate infants who die as soon as they are formed. Fresh pleasures may indeed succeed; but the same mortality awaits them. God jealously watches over their conception, and they no sooner receive existence, than they are annihilated. What, then, has the infatuated sinner gained by yielding to temptation? Where are the wages for which he was hired? They are eternally gone: they vanished, as soon as put into his hands. All he can say is, that he had a momentary possession of them; that he had a kind of riches for a moment: but, that moment passed, he relapsed into all his former poverty. Thus slips his life away: urged on to a repetition of his crimes by the same lure of pleasure, and always losing these his wages as soon as he earns them, he at length reaches that inevitable period, when his cruel masters will hire him no longer, but now scoffingly refuse to his earnest petition even that momentary pleasure, which had hitherto been his wages. In a word, he has passed his mortal life, that first step into an eternal existence, eagerly pursuing pleasure, for which he felt himself created, and to which he was necessarily impelled: and at the conclusion of this, the first stage of his being, he finds himself as destitute of all his past pleasures as if he had never enjoyed them. They were the wages of sin: they are therefore dead, and dead for ever. *For the wages of sin is death.*

But comparatively happy would be his lot, did death strike his pleasures only in this world. But this is not the case; for St. Paul, in the words of my text, alludes to another infinitely more terrible death, which will be the wages of his sin;—wages paid into the sinner's hands, not by the tyrannical usurper, whom he has hitherto served, but by his legitimate Master, whose authority he has despised.

Whether he will or no, he must now enter a new state of existence, a state, which will never end or change. He will bear with him, across the fatal barrier which separates the two states, all his fatal propensities: and, in particular, his love of plea-

sure, so far from abating by his separation from an earthly substance, will acquire an almost infinite increase of intensity. But, however desirous he may be to carry with him those pleasures on which his appetite has hitherto fed, he cannot; for they were the wages of sin, and therefore they are dead. He can only bear with him his sins, his treasons against his legitimate master, who is now to be his Judge: and these are his only claims on this his master for pleasure in eternity! Can these claims be admitted? If any, even the slightest pleasure be allowed him in his fixed and eternal state, then will he receive wages of infinite value for abandoning the service of his legitimate Lord, and be eternally rewarded for contemning his authority. But no! His wages must be death! A Being of essential and infinite justice can award him no other. Oh! dreadful state of the sinner, on his entrance into eternity! Borne by nature itself, and therefore irresistibly, towards pleasure: borne towards it now with incomparably more force, than when during his mortality it so often led him into sin, he is by his just judge condemned to be for ever bereft of all pleasure. Thus, his propensities will be for ever in a state of inconceivable violence, exhibiting the dreadful spectacle of simultaneous life and death, by being eternally without an object.

See, my brethren, what the sinner gains by his unlawful pleasures! See, what are his wages here, and what must be his wages in eternity!

I am aware, that sinners in general, though they experience how fleeting are the pleasures they enjoy, and therefore acknowledge, that in this sense the wages of their works is death, yet flatter themselves that the more terrible death, of which I have been speaking, will not be their portion; for they intend to repent. But what is implied by the word repentance? A sincere regret for what they have done; a sincere feeling, that, could the past time be recalled, they would rather die a thousand deaths than admit any forbidden pleasure. This regret they expect to experience one day, with respect to what they are now engaged in perpetrating; and this is the hope by which they encourage themselves in their audacity. Can any folly equal this? Can we conceive a greater madness, than deliberately to do, what we hope, hereafter, to wish never to have done? But

is the sinner sure that he will be, one day, in these dispositions of repentance, with respect to the forbidden pleasure, which he now intends to enjoy? Is there no God, who watches his motions, who is a witness of this his foolish, impious hope? Is not this God the absolute master of his existence? Can he not disappoint his expectation of lengthened days, as he did that of the rich man mentioned in the Gospel, and any moment pronounce against him the same sentence? *Thou fool, this night shall they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?* But, though God should allow him a prolongation of yet a few years, will he at any time give him the grace of repentance? Will he change his heart for him, and introduce into it dispositions the very contrary to those which he is now resolved to follow? Ah! my dear brethren, it is much to be feared that he will not; and that the mortal sin, which he now resolves to commit, will be the cause of his eternal reprobation; and, consequently, that not only the pleasure, of which he is in pursuit, will vanish out of his hands, like a phantom; but that its wages in eternity will be that total deprivation of all enjoyment, that pain of loss, which forms the essential, and, therefore, the greatest torment of the damned.

But, let us now consider the condition of him, who victoriously resists temptation.

He has refused a pleasure forbidden by his sovereign Master; that is to say, he has indignantly rejected a bribe by which his fidelity was attempted. This bribe was a delusive one, and would not only have vanished out of his hand the moment he had grasped at it, but would have exposed him to be deprived of all pleasure for eternity. Will any one say, that he did not act wisely? But still, is it not true, that he is, at least in this world, more miserable than the sinner? No, it is not true; the very reverse is true. His infinitely generous master will not permit him to be a loser, even in this life, for his fidelity. *To him who overcomes,* says this divine master, in the Apocalypse, *I will give to eat of the hidden Manna.* In fact, as in the human body, order in all its parts is necessary for the enjoyment of pleasure, and as, on the contrary, pain is the necessary consequence of a perturbation of this order; so, by the sweet laws of Providence, whoever preserves order in his soul by fol-

lowing the dictates of reason, is sure to enjoy the sweetest repose of conscience, and a kind of foretaste of the joys of that region where all things are essentially and eternally in order; as, on the contrary, whoever disturbs harmony in his soul, by snatching at pleasures forbidden him by God, the supreme source and seat of reason, will infallibly experience an immediate punishment, the forerunner of the pain of loss in a future world. But, to preserve order in our souls, we must necessarily overcome our passions, which, since the fall of man, strongly tend to throw the whole moral world into confusion. It is indeed true, that against their violence we cannot stand, without the most vigorous efforts. But, in this conflict, we are not left to ourselves; we have, I may say, omnipotence itself at our order; for we have the promise of God, that, if we have recourse to him, he will always make such issue with temptation, that we shall infallibly overcome.

The immediate reward of our triumphs is an increase of sanctifying grace, as St. Paul informs us in the epistles of this day. *But now being made free from sin, and become servants of God, you have fruit unto sanctification.* With this increase of sanctifying grace is infused an increased vigor against temptation. For, as the tyrant of hell fixes more and more his infernal chains on his unhappy slaves every time they obey his dictates, and makes them feel more and more their galling pressure; so, our true master takes from the weight of his yoke, every time we resist temptations, and, by his sweet internal motions, marks his complacency at our faithfulness. Hence, those, who have the happiness of passing their youthful days in a successful resistance of their passions, are generally rewarded by God, by being established in grace for the remainder of their days; according to that of the scripture:—*A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.* In fact, as victories, obtained over the passions in youth, are necessarily the result of great struggles, their Divine Master rewards this their tried fidelity by so many graces, and his internal comforts have rendered his service so agreeable, that their enemies at length stand at bay, and seldom venture into close combat with them. Thus the condition of those who resist their passions is the very reverse of that of those who yield

to them. The latter forfeit pleasure, the only advantage they propose to themselves, the moment they enjoy it, and become a prey to disappointment and remorse; the former, in lieu of the fleeting pleasures which they reject, enjoy the perpetual feast of a good conscience, and the delightful consolations of the Holy Ghost. The latter increase the strength of their passions, by every gratification; and, by every act of obedience to the devil, confirm his tyrannic sway over them: the former weaken their passions by every successful struggle, till at length they hold them completely under their command, and thus the yoke, imposed on them by Jesus Christ, which is nothing but self-restraint, becomes, as he has promised, light and easy.

But, the difference between the two conditions is best seen at the period when both are to quit their present state of existence, and enter into their respective eternities. Figure to yourselves two persons who entered life at the same time, have run their course nearly in the same circumstances, and are both now about to expire. Of these, one has indulged in unlawful gratifications, the other has constantly rejected them. What are the feelings of the former? Where are the pleasures which he pursued and enjoyed in opposition to his conscience, and by an abuse of the most precious graces of God? For he could not have become wicked except by struggling, as I may say, with God, to become so. Where, now, are all his pleasures? Cannot, at least, the remembrance of them console him? and cannot his soul feed on them, at least in retrospect? Ah! view his countenance, where gloom and disappointment sit enthroned! Enter his interior, a barren dreary desert, where not a single plant of supernatural virtue appears, and not a drop of celestial dew falls; a land accursed by his Creator, and an emblem of that dismal solitude, that region bereft of every comfort, in which he is to pass his eternity! Such is the conclusion of his joys, such the wages he has obtained for sin.

But from this appalling spectacle, turn your eyes to an adjoining bed, on which lies, equally in the agonies of death, a virtuous Christian. His conflicts are all over, but how consoling is their remembrance! Whilst he endured them, indeed, they inflicted pain, but now they are the source of heartfelt pleasure. Yes, he knows in whom he has believed; and he is

certain God has kept what he has committed to him against this day. Ah! now it is that he particularly tastes the manna which Christ has promised to those who overcome. Habituated to cleave to God, to love him, and to sacrifice all things to him, he feels God reciprocally cleaving to him, and holding him in his sweet embrace. He already seems to hear the whispers of that gracious sentence which is about to be really pronounced in his favor: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* That is to say, because thou hast listened to my voice, rather than to that of my enemy, and hast sought for happiness in me, rather than in joys which my law prohibited, the time is come for thee to experience the wisdom of thy choice: *Enter into the joys of thy Lord.* I formed thee for happiness, I gave thee an irresistible propensity to happiness, and a vast power of enjoying it;—come, yield thyself up, without restraint, to this thy inclination; plunge into the ocean of true pleasure, drink to the very full of the torrent of delights, and never more feel the least check to thy unbounded desires.

Can any thing be conceived more enviable than the condition of this dying Christian, who has resisted his passions, and preserved his fidelity to his God? This condition will be one day yours, my brethren, if you imitate him. Wherefore, when the devil or your evil inclinations tempt you, reject their offer of pleasure with disdain, and you, too, will one day hear the sweet invitation of Jesus Christ to eternal felicity!

Sermon XLX.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost.

DIGNITY AND DUTIES OF A CHRISTIAN.

Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost.
Acts viii. 17.

This day, my brethren, will form an epoch in our brief history. What Peter and John did in Samaria has, this day, been accomplished among you. A successor of the apostles, commissioned by the same divine authority, and inheriting the same powers, has called the same Spirit, from that celestial throne, where he sits in equal glory with the Father and the Son, into your hearts. Or am I, perhaps, rash in the latter part of the assertion? The inspired evangelist was indeed authorized to say, that, by the imposition of the hands of Peter and John, the Samaritans received the Holy Ghost. Whether you are now partakers of the same divine spirit, I am not competent to decide. All I can safely affirm is, that, if by the future tenor of your lives, you should unfortunately prove to the world that your breasts continue strangers to his sanctifying influence, the fault has been your own: you have closed your hearts against him; you have not expelled those mortal enemies of his, Satan and sin, from their ancient domain; you have refused to part with some cherished vice, you have shrunk from breaking in pieces some adored idol. But let me not give way to these gloomy anticipations. I will expect better things of you. I will indulge the pleasing hope that you have had the happiness to admit the spirit of God into your hearts, and to receive, with him, the plenitude of his graces—graces which will accompany you through life, render you superior to the world and all its allure-

ments, enable you to deride the assaults of Satan, and all the powers of hell; in a word, graces which will make you strong and perfect Christians: for such is the effect of confirmation received in proper dispositions. Confirmation, says the Douay Catechism, is a sacrament which makes us strong and perfect Christians. To some reflections on the Christian's dignity and duties, I will now call your attention.

At once, then, what is a Christian? My brethren, the least, the most unworthy Christian is a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belongs,—on whose slightest action the spirits of light and of darkness look with anxious interest,—on the most secret desires and affections of whose heart the Almighty himself bends the observant eye of jealousy;—a being who has been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to possess an existence which shall continue when heaven and earth have passed away. For him the stars observe their appointed courses, and in innumerable streams shed from the nightly sky their tempered lustre. For him the punctual sun has received a command when to rise and when to set. But after the stars, and after the sun, he shall be. When the countless hosts of heaven, from their present regularity, shall have been hurled into primitive chaos, and when the sun—fair, but transitory creature—shall have forgotten his wonted journey through the sky, he shall live—live on through eternities, in duration not unequal to Him who made him. *I have said, ye are gods.* If his name be not found in the registers of heralds, it may be recorded in the book of life. If his steps be not attended by a splendid train of menials, a ministering angel has charge over him to keep him in all his ways. For his sake empires have risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He has been wrested, by no common deliverer, from the grasp of no common foe. He has been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. For him the dead arose, the rocks were rent, the sun was darkened, and all nature shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God. But I am losing myself in the grandeur of my subject.

Again, then, what is a Christian? He is a follower of Christ,

enlightened with the faith, educated on the principles of the gospel, instructed in the unshaken truths of religion. He is a member of Jesus Christ. All Christians form but one body, of which Christ Jesus is the head, and of which they must be the members, living the life of a God. He is the temple of the Holy Ghost; not only his soul, but, according to St. Paul, his body also the living temple of the divine spirit. *Know ye not*, says the apostle, *that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost?*

What more is a Christian? He is a destined inhabitant of heaven. His palace is a house not made by hands; his diadem, a crown of glory which fadeth not away. He is expected to a sceptre and a throne, to delights, glories, and prerogatives, which not only is mortal tongue unable to express, but which the immortal soul herself, in this her dark minority, vainly toils and pants to comprehend. *It hath not yet appeared what we shall be.* Glorious was the spectacle which the mother of the Machabees exhibited when she saw her seven sons led before her to martyrdom. The tyrant had pronounced their death; the executioners stood by with the instruments of torture, fire, sword, and every weapon which cruelty could produce. Six of the seven had sealed their fidelity with their blood, which in plentiful streams was poured out under the eyes of the heroic mother. The youngest remained, and the tyrant was alternately trying threats and promises to shake his resolution, while the mother, exhorting him to courage, said: *My son, I beseech thee, look upon heaven.* The Church addresses the same language to every Christian. Look upon heaven: remember, that, in quality of Christian, heaven is thy country. The earth is to thee a place of banishment, the world a foreign land; heaven is thy birthright, heaven is thy inheritance. How, my brethren, how does the distance between the highest and the lowest, the proudest and the meanest of men, seem to vanish; how insignificant appear the much-boasted distinctions of birth, rank, or wealth, when we think of that never-ending happiness which the Christian has it in his power to secure! Do men glory in the greatness of their birth, the nobility of their ancestors? Lo! the Father of the Christian is great above all greatness, the King of kings and Lord of lords. *Ye shall be my sons and*

daughters, saith the Lord God Almighty. Do men glory in the favor of their prince, their access to his person, and his readiness to grant their requests? Behold, the Christian has always free access to the Father of mercies, through the Son, his Saviour. *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.* Do men glory in exalted places and preferments? But what are these, in comparison with that everlasting recompense which has been prepared for the Christian by him who is the Prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved him, and will make him co-heir with himself, and a king and a priest unto God and his Father? Lift thyself up, then, soul of the Christian: these are thy prerogatives, this thy dignity. Thou wast made for heaven, and what is earth to thee? Being formed for eternity, why shouldst thou be busied with time?

When the prophet Jonas had embarked for the port of Tharsis in Celicia, being unknown to the crew, he was asked by the pilot who he was, of what profession, whence he came, and whither he was bound. *I am a Hebrew*, replied Jonas, *I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven:* as if he had said, My whole profession, my qualifications, and my titles, are all comprised in these few words, *I fear the Lord.* A noble sentiment, which suits well the character of that Christian who has an adequate idea of the benefits and honors which he has received from God, of the indispensable obligation incumbent upon him of serving God, and of the greatness of the glory which accrues from serving him. Let others, will the Christian say, let others assume titles, and glory in pompous names; let pitiful worldlings be distinguished as great, rich, powerful: let earthly monarchs rival each other in high-sounding epithets. I covet not their tinsel honors. All my dignities and titles are easily summed up. They consist in this:—I am a Christian. If others pursue eagerly the schemes which they form, to promote their temporal advancement, to flatter their ambition and increase their fortunes, my only glory is to serve my God, and my whole ambition is to serve him well.

But, how the Almighty should be served, is the second question which we have to consider. We have seen the dignity of a Christian, his prerogatives, and the glory which awaits him. We have now to see, how he ought to live, out of gratitude for

the favors he has already received, and to obtain the happiness for which he was created. I have shown you what God has done for the Christian, I am now to tell you what the Christian ought to do for God.

What, then, to answer these glorious ends, ought the Christian to be? A man formed upon the maxims of the gospel. He should present to the admiration of the world an assemblage of all virtues, fidelity in his discourse, sincerity in his sentiments, uprightness in his conduct, modesty without affectation, grandeur without haughtiness, humility without baseness. He should feel that he has passions, only to overcome them; pleasures, to sacrifice them; duties, to comply with them. He should slight commendation, and only study to deserve it; should fear to be thought virtuous, almost as much as to sin; and should fear sin more than death itself. A Christian should be detached from the world, estranged from the world, crucified to the world. A Christian should be mild, patient, condescending, charitable, making himself all to all, bearing with the defects, compassionating the sufferings, and excusing the faults of his brethren. A Christian should show himself, by his life, to be a man entirely heavenly, living on earth as though he lived not on it, enjoying its possessions as though he enjoyed them not, having his body indeed on earth, but his affections in heaven. A Christian should be raised above the vicissitudes of life. If his goods are torn from him, if health forsake and friends abandon him, yet, his faith remaining, he should account himself to have lost nothing. He should be raised above the world, triumph over its errors, which his faith should dispel; over its pleasures, which his heart should scorn; over its threats, which his courage should despise. He should be raised above torments, tyrants, and death itself.

The Christian is essentially a man of self-denial, according to that of our Saviour, *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself.* And when a man is inured to perpetual self-denial, what more is required, to be resigned to die. It was this predisposition, which the pagans admired so much in the first Christians. What kind of men are these, they cried out; if they are accused at our tribunals, they present themselves of their own accord before us; if they are condemned to the tor-

ture, they return thanks, as for a favor; if they are led to execution, they go with joy on their countenance, as to a triumph, and smile in death! Threaten to inflict upon them all the torments that can be invented: "You may do it," they reply; "we are men destined to die, and we are Christians, prepared to die like saints; we have bodies that may perish, but a faith and a soul, that shall remain inviolate. You think to inflict death upon us, while you only restore us to a better life. If time ends, eternity begins." What men were these, what sentiments had they! After all, they were but true Christians.

A Christian, moreover, ought to be a man of prayer and recollection. Instead of depending on the society of men or on external objects for amusement and delight, he must be supplied with every pleasure from his own breast. There he should find his God, and in his company alone should he be happy. In the midst of dissipation and in the hurry of business, he should incessantly recall his wandering thoughts; in the midst of domestic solicitude, and the cares of a busy world, he ought to form a private solitude in his heart, and there, from time to time, entertain himself with his Lord; there piously lament the necessity which obliges him to mix in temporal things, and interrupt his meditations; there endeavor, by acts of love and gratitude, to make some amends for the many crimes which thoughtless mortals are incessantly committing. A Christian, in his whole life, ought to be directed by the influence of that Holy Spirit who resides within him; his most ordinary actions should be sanctified by religion. Whether he eats or drinks, mourns or rejoices, whether he is in opulence or indigence, health or sickness, pious reflections should occur to his mind, and prompt him to pour forth his soul to God in acts of submission and love. The transactions and vicissitudes of the world, the revolutions of states and empires, the fall and elevation of families, the prosperity or misery of the times, the defection of the just, and the conversion of sinners, in short, all the changes which are witnessed in the world, and which rekindle in worldly souls the love of vanity, should be, to the true Christian, food for piety and lessons of deep instruction. Every thing ought to remind him of the truths of religion, and to display in a new light the emptiness of all created things, and the importance of eternity. After

all, the Christian is insecure, unless, in addition, he acknowledge and feel himself to be an unworthy servant, unless his past offences be constantly before his eyes, unless, fully conscious of his present weakness and defects, he attribute whatever good he may possess to the gratuitous liberality of heaven, and unless this self-knowledge inspire him with the resolution of reforming every failing by a constant vigilance over all his future actions, and of satisfying the justice of God for the past, by penitential exercises. In a word, the disciple should imitate his master: the Christian should resemble Christ; should resemble him in his sentiments, in his conversation, and in his actions.

On each of these heads, allow me to enlarge a little, even at the risk of repetition.

Of the sentiments of Jesus Christ, we can judge from his actions, and these speak clearly. Though infinitely rich, he chose to be born poor, to live poor, and to die poor; here we see his contempt of riches, and his love of poverty. Though equal to his Father in all things, he humbled himself so far as to take the form of a servant, and become obedient even to the death of the cross: here we see his love of humiliation and of suffering. Now, let me ask, instead of loving humiliations, have you not an aversion to every thing that tends to humble you? Is it not hence arise your want of respect to your superiors, your contempt of your inferiors, and those airs of distinction which you affect among your equals? Does not the least slight in word or gesture imbitter your mind and move your resentment? If you happen to fail in any effort, from which you expected applause, do you regard this humiliation as a blessing, which God himself bestows upon you? I do not undertake to answer these questions. I only remind you, that, if humiliations are displeasing, if you seek to be flattered, if you place your satisfaction in the esteem and praises of men, your sentiments are opposite to those of Jesus Christ. And you, my brethren, on whom Providence has bestowed a liberal portion of what are called the goods of this life, have you, in regard to your possessions, the same sentiments as that God-Man who has pronounced so many maledictions against the rich? Do you sincerely prefer poverty to riches? Are your hearts entirely disengaged from your wealth? Do you in earnest believe that

the grace of God is infinitely preferable to all the treasures of the earth? Would you choose rather to lose the last farthing than your Maker's favor? If, this instant, he should demand a sacrifice of every thing, are you prepared to make it? Would you give all with a good heart, and a ready will? If you are not in these sentiments, you do not think as your Saviour thought. And you, dear Christian, who labor with your hands, and with difficulty procure your daily bread, do you not desire to be rich? Do you not envy your more prosperous brethren? Do you not look upon yourself as one of the most miserable of men? Is it not hence that your murmurs arise? your untruths? and the little injustices with which you are sometimes reproached? If you are dissatisfied with that state which Jesus Christ preferred to all others, notwithstanding an outward similarity of circumstances, neither do you resemble your Saviour in internal dispositions.

From the sentiments, let us proceed to the conversation of Christians. Passed is the golden age of religion, when the name of Jesus Christ, and maxims which he delivered, were mixed with all the discourses of the faithful. In these times, the language of religion is nowhere to be found, but in sermons and books of piety. We have scarce courage enough, in company, to mention the adorable name of our Saviour. An officer can discourse of the wars; the husbandman, of agriculture; the mechanic, of his trade. And shall a Christian be afraid to talk and converse as a Christian, and to reason agreeably to the maxims of Christianity? I do not mean that the gospel should be the subject of all your entertainments; much less, that you should irreverently mention that name, before which the powers of heaven tremble; or, by an indiscreet zeal, expose yourselves and your religion to the banter of profane witlings. My meaning is, that, when you speak of vice and virtue, riches or poverty, of what constitutes the happiness or misery of man, you should be known by your language to be Christians.

Perhaps my meaning may be better understood by an example.—We will suppose a Christian matron to be giving her farewell instructions to a daughter, whom she expects to see no more. "My daughter," the mother would probably say, "be modest and reserved. Ever bear in mind, that modesty is the

peculiar ornament of your sex, and that without it, all the other good qualities which you possess will pass for nothing. Be not familiar with young men. Admit of no liberty that deviates ever so little from good breeding; have a respect for yourself, if you would have others respect you. Seek to please by your reserve and gravity, more than by your figure and dress." You are inclined to stop me here, and ask, are not these wise precepts? Is not this advice worthy of a Christian? Worthy of a Christian? my brethren. No! A pagan might with propriety say the same. Why has religion no part in these instructions? Why might not the mother have said, "My daughter, take care to preserve yourself from that spirit of vanity, that desire of pleasing, that love of pleasure and gayety, which are the ordinary defects of your age and sex, and which commonly lead to vice, and terminate in ruin. Remember, that clothing was ordained to cover shame, and not to be the instrument of vanity. Remember, that the true mirror of the Christian is the crucifix. View yourself there, more frequently than in the looking-glass; for there you will discover the defects, not of your body, but of your mind. In a word, study rather to make yourself pleasing in the sight of God, than to appear amiable in the eyes of men." This is what I call speaking the language of a Christian, and I have purposely made the application to parents, because, generally, children talk like those by whom they have been instructed. If parents will talk to their children in the language of religion, their children will, imperceptibly, become imbued with holy maxims, will acquire a relish for piety, and contract a blessed habit of thinking, reasoning, and discoursing conformably to the rules of Christianity.

To think and speak as Christians is still insufficient, unless you live like Christians, unless you form your conduct upon the model of Christ. What can it avail me, to say and think that all beneath the sun is vanity, and that this world passeth away and the figure thereof, if, at the same time, I make it my only endeavor to amass wealth, joining house to house and field to field. What can it avail me to admire the piety which prompted my Saviour to devote whole nights to prayer, when to me one half hour appears insupportably irksome? What can it avail me to praise that active benevolence with which Jesus of Nazareth

went about doing good, if I am unwilling to put myself to the least inconvenience for the service of my neighbor? It is a clear case: my knowledge of my duty will only serve to insure my condemnation and increase my punishment.

Thus, my brethren, I have set before you, in one short view, your duties as Christians,—those duties, which are more fully explained, one by one, in the course of the year, those obligations, which you took upon yourselves at the baptismal font, and which some of you have, this day, afresh undertaken to fulfil.

If these duties are arduous, I have not concealed their difficulties from you. Think not, however, that it is my wish to dishearten. Not to dishearten, nor to shame you, have I spoken these things: but I admonish you, as most beloved brethren, to watch, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened. For this cause, I bow my knees, daily, to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit unto the inward man. Your duties are indeed arduous, and you are weak; but, in that weakness and your consciousness of that weakness, consists your strength: for you can do all things, in him, who strengthens you. While, therefore, you feel and lament your own infirmity, lift up your eyes, with filial confidence, to your Saviour. It is he who giveth strength to the weary, and force to them that are not. They, that hope in the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Remember, however, that this confidence in your Saviour is not to be converted into a pretext for sloth. You must do your own endeavors. Every nerve must be strained, the whole man exerted. A race is set before us, a contest is proposed to us; and no man shall be crowned, but he who has lawfully fought. Encouraged by those who have gone before you, who have finished their course with joy, and gained the victory, hasten to give in your names and to enter the lists. So run that you may obtain. Forget the things that are behind, and reach forth to those that are before, and press towards the mark, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Remember, that, while you loiter, time passes away: the day of grace is expiring, the season allotted for exertion will soon be closed, and that the night cometh, when the contest will be finally decided and no more renewed for ever. Remember, in fine, that he who instituted the race invited you to the contest, and promised to encourage and strengthen you throughout the course: he waits at the goal to receive you, will publicly declare his approbation of you before men and angels, and, with his own hands, will place on your heads the crown of unfading glory.

Sermon XLIX.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

SEARCH AFTER HAPPINESS.

When Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, seeing the city, he wept over it, saying, If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes.—Luke xix. 41, 42.

Good, in one shape or another, either real or apparent, true or false, is the natural and necessary object of man's pursuit; he can no more cease to pursue it than he can suspend his vital respiration. But here his great misfortune is, that, whilst he himself is a short-sighted fallible being, he has to choose for himself, among a great variety of deceitful objects, all decorating themselves with the name and appearance of good. As he advances along the opening avenue of life, pleasures, beauty, talents, riches, and other specious advantages, pass in review before him, and lay claim, in turns, to his judgment and his heart. Observation of his fellow-men only serves to bewilder and distract him. One he sees abandon himself to the giddy chase of pleasure, another confine himself to the sober pursuit of gain. One he observes striking into the high-road of ambition; another turning aside into the by-paths of literature. If he enters into general converse, and attempts to form his opinion by the prevailing votes of society, he returns the more confused. He finds each trivial advantage, in turn, the object of admiration, just as caprice or passion happens to rule the judgment of the hour.

In this uncertainty, not only is his choice perplexed, but his natural ambition is painfully thwarted. For, next to his inbred appetite for good, one of his strongest propensities is to aim at

the greatest good. He must not only have good, but he must have that which he knows to be the first and best; otherwise, his desires will soon break forth into new and painful excursions. An interesting question, therefore, here arises: "Is there such a thing as this first good?" That there is good to be found somewhere, cannot be doubted; since man's appetites were not given him in vain. But is there, within the precincts of life, a superior and primary good, which may supply the place of every other, and, in its single possession, furnish an opiate to the restless ambition of the human heart? If there is, my brethren, and we discover it, we attain an invaluable object. We put an end, at once, to all our doubts and distractions respecting good, and learn to acquiesce in that one which will leave us without anxiety for any other; and thus enter, at length, on the long-sought path which conducts us to our essential happiness.

On this interesting search, I propose, this day, to set out with you. But, in order to facilitate the discovery of that primary good, which is the object of it, we must provide and carry with us a plain and adequate criterion. This, I think, we shall completely find in two obvious qualities, which such a good must possess. It must be permanent, and it must be adequate. If it be not permanent, it can never hold the first place in the estimation of a being who is by nature calculating and forecasting: and, if it be not adequate, that is, equal to his capacities, it wants the very first requisite; since he can never, even momentarily, repose, but in the complete satisfaction of his own heart. Let us, then, apply the touchstone of these two qualities to such advantages as are most prominent in life, and see whether, among them, we can discover that primary good of which we are in quest. They naturally divide themselves into two kinds: those that are attached to us, and those that are foreign to us. The former include all the advantages of body and mind; the latter, all the external advantages of fortune. This division, I believe, is comprehensive of all which the world has to show; and, if we fail, within its limits, of discovering our object, we shall be necessitated to place it elsewhere.

The first of the advantages of life that come under our examination are those which are not foreign, but annexed to us;

that is, all the endowments of body and mind. I have made this arrangement, not as considering it due to any superiority of the others above these, since we find, in the sacred writings, mere health declared to be *better than immense riches;* but that I may follow the order of time. For, the first that attract our notice, as we advance along the road of life, will be found, I believe, to be the exterior advantages attached to our frame. Of these, the most obvious are health, strength, and all their attendant qualities. Do these, then, constitute that primary good of which we are in search? In the first place, are they adequate? Do they satisfy the heart? The question seems almost nugatory. The sick man, indeed, on his weary couch, and the old man, bending under the load of years, are apt to conceive that the return of health and vigor is all that is requisite to secure their felicity; but no delusion can be more obvious. He that has lost these advantages sighs for them; but he who possesses them feels them not. They are mere preliminaries to the enjoyment of the other advantages of life, and are no sooner held in probable security than they are overlooked and forgotten. As to their permanency, the decision is equally brief. They are precarious, almost to a proverb. The accident of a moment will convert the soundest health into incurable disease, and a few days' sickness is amply sufficient to place giant strength on a level with infant weakness. Indeed, it is not necessary to dwell longer here.

I therefore turn to the advantages of person, under which I mean to include all external accomplishments, whether natural or acquired. These have often deceived and tortured the human heart, and may, therefore, be allowed a more formal examination. Their permanency, indeed, will not detain us long; for, as they are mere externals, they can claim no greater durability than the substance which supports them; and, as the human frame is acknowledged to be the most frail of compounds, these must be of all advantages the most transitory. But what shall we say to the other point of the inquiry? Are they not adequate? Do they not impart happiness to their possessor? We see every eye meet them with a smile: they strike the beholder with instant delight, and almost extort his approbation. And is it possible that he, who thus powerfully communicates plea-

sure, should feel none himself, but be insensible amid the general complacency? Before, however, we yield our admiration to these specious appearances, let us pause awhile, lest we repeat the folly of our first parent, who, *seeing that the tree was fair to eye, took of the fruit thereof and eat it*, and has left us to lament the bitter consequences of her folly. Let us first coolly reflect that these superficial advantages, which appear thus to act with a magic influence, are generally the surest counteractors of themselves, the first to dissolve their own momentary charm. For it is their very nature, and almost inevitably their fate, to produce that self-sufficiency which is the most odious of all defects, and a sure introduction to indifference and neglect. Indeed, it is remarkable, and I think peculiar, in these advantages, that they are little better than negative to their possessor; for we find that they are never sure in their effects, except when he upon whom they sit is unconscious of their influence.

Having premised this, we may safely allow them what little belongs to them. They do, it is acknowledged, raise in the breast, which is conscious of them, a momentary triumph, a transitory flutter of exultation. But what kind of satisfaction is this, my brethren, which dies in the very moment of its birth? Can this be that substantial happiness, which is to content an immortal soul? It is rather a momentary giddiness, than a tranquil consciousness of delight. Besides, how dearly is it purchased, at the expense of whole hours of subsequent listlessness and languor; effects, which none experience more frequently or more severely than the temporary objects of admiration and flattery. Moreover, even if this trivial advantage were less transient, how ill would it compensate for all those uneasy passions, which it is so apt to nourish in the heart of its possessor, jealousy, envy, spleen, and vexation! Hence few enjoy so little internal felicity as those upon whom nature has lavished all its smiling appearances: while they are the envy of the superficial observer, they are almost ever a torment to themselves. The gay circle or the festive board is only occasional and transient; whilst the solitary hour, the retired apartment, and the pensive couch are daily and inevitable.

Indeed, man himself is not long in discovering the emptiness of these advantages of the exterior. He observes, that, if their

first impression be powerful, it is proportionably evanescent: it dies away, even under his own eye, and, when he retires, becomes totally extinct. Hence he quickly learns to undervalue advantages, which are thus confined by the narrow circle of their own presence, and transfers his attention to others, of wider compass and more promising stability. The next, then, that attract his notice in his progress through life, appear to be the internal advantages of mind, genius, talent, and superiority of intellect. And it must be acknowledged, that the first appearances of these are not a little imposing: reason herself seems to invest them with some authority. For it is mind, chiefly, that distinguishes man, not only from the irrationals, but from his fellow-men; it effectually raises him above them, and gives him a superiority, before which they feel themselves in a manner forced to bend. Hence, in a comparison with other temporal blessings, it ever takes that natural precedence which mind has over matter. The superficial advantages last considered disappear before these; *they* attract observation, and procure flattery: *these* command respect, and enforce deference and submission. Even power and greatness pay homage to genius, and either avail themselves of its services or decorate themselves with its patronage. And is not this sufficient? May we not rest here, as in our primary good?—No, my brethren, all this is far too little. We must try these advantages by our rule, and we shall find, that, in both requisites, they are palpably deficient.

In one sense, indeed, we may allow them to be permanent, inasmuch as they depend on an internal principle. But, when we consider how great is the dependence of mind on body, and how often power in the former is counterbalanced by infirmity in the latter; how frequently the highest mental endowments are interrupted and even taken away by accident, and how almost inevitably they sink under the influence of age and decrepitude; and, independently of this, how often, in possession itself, they seem to abandon their possessor, and, when he most depends on them, to fret him with disappointment, and leave his admirers astonished at his inequality:—when we take all this into the account, we shall see, that the only sense in which even permanency can be allowed them is quite partial and insufficient.

But the other is the essential point: are they adequate? Do they insure the happiness of their owner? To this a decided negative is the only possible answer. If they enlarge his views of things, and enable him to contemplate, with some advantage, the world of nature or of science, this is the utmost of their praise; and this, being a merely speculative pleasure, totally unconnected with the heart, has no share in the composition of genuine felicity. Doubtless, if admiration and applause, flattery and fame were happiness, the talented individual might lay some claim to it; for of no man are these the surer perquisites. But how little connection have these with true felicity! What is admiration, at the best, but an external gaze, without any avenue to the heart? What is praise? A breath, a vapour, which plays around the deluded sense for a moment, and then vanishes into emptiness, serving only to create an appetite which it cannot satisfy. All these things, too, are as precarious as they are unsatisfactory. He, that gave them, can take them away; and though, when given, they cannot satiate the heart, they have, when taken away, full power to torture it. To the keen sensibility of genius, nothing pains, like praise expected and withheld; and yet, in the nature of things, it must be a pang as frequent as acute. Another feature in these advantages, which completes their inability to confer happiness, is their aspiring and ambitious tendency. They lift up the mind to a pitch of eagerness inconsistent with repose, and, therefore, with felicity; they teach it to grasp at impossibilities, and, therefore, prepare it for disappointment; and, still worse, they fill it with an unbounded desire of superiority, which, sooner or later, is sure to be thwarted and confounded. For the most extensive genius will not want, among his contemporaries, abundant subjects of humiliation; and, if he should, his restless ambition will search among the dead, and pine, in secret comparison with the illustrious of past ages. We may conclude, then, that these advantages are totally inadequate. History and biography amply confirm the assertion: their voluminous pages seem little more than varied details of the abuse of talent, and of the miseries that attend upon it, and thus justify the assertion, that, however much the object of envy, genius is generally the curse of its possessor. It may not be amiss to conclude, that, perhaps,

even here, the golden mean holds good, and that, were our lot, in this respect, determined by our own choice, we ought, in prudence, to prefer mediocrity to distinction. For the grand end and aim of our being is not greatness, but happiness.

We have now, my brethren, prosecuted our search through those advantages of life, which I distinguish as being attached to ourselves; those which are foreign to us, yet remain for our examination. These seem to come next, in the order of man's attention and pursuit; for he soon finds, however much he may be captivated by any of the forementioned, that all his admiration of them cannot help him to their attainment; that they are the unbought gifts of nature, and are by no arts to be acquired when she has once withheld them. Hence, to console himself under his privation, he looks round for other advantages of less arbitrary origin, and immediately fixes his eye on the honors, riches, or pleasures of life. These I call its external advantages.

As to the idea of their being adequate, we might think it far from unreasonable, were we to judge from the general conduct of mankind, whom we see crowding after them, with all the eagerness of settled conviction. However, we shall find a sufficient refutation of the idea in the very epithet which accompanies them. They are *external:* how is it possible for any thing foreign to the man to constitute his felicity? In vain does he press them to his heart; in vain does he adhere to them with all the avidity of desire. The heart constantly repels the unnatural union, and stings him with the pangs of disappointment. In vain does he harden himself against experience, and try again upon these advantages the hopeless experiment, as if by perseverance he could extort from them some secret felicity. All he obtains is a repetition of disappointment. The ambitious man ascends the elevation on which he was finally to rest all his hopes and desires; and immediately finds it only a step, from which he must commence again his painful toil. The rich man, at length, grasps the long-calculated sum at which he had promised to terminate his wishes; and immediately they expand into all their former avidity. The man of pleasure again drinks at the unhallowed fountain of enjoyment, and finds his thirst as unquenched as ever. They never can, therefore, and never will satisfy the heart; and we have only to recur for a moment to

our own observation, to perceive that they never do. If they were satisfactory, we ought certainly to discover the most evident signs of content among those who are the most favored with them; yet it is notorious, that the opposite indications are nowhere more observable than among their privileged ranks. Among them do we chiefly meet with those worst tormentors of human life, impatience, fretfulness, fastidiousness, and ennui; it is from them we chiefly hear those unmeaning declamations against the emptiness and deceitfulness of life. The poor man toils through the painful day for a scanty subsistence, yet blesses Providence that he is not the lowest on the scale of misery:—the rich riots in ease and affluence, and discovers still some motive to repine. If we would see farther, how little connection these advantages have with real happiness, reverse their situations for a moment: transfer to the poor man the possessions of the rich. Immediately his former content abandons him; with his new fortune he puts on thoughtfulness and disquietude, and, in a short time, becomes himself an accomplished example of splendid unhappiness!

So notoriously are these advantages inadequate to felicity! And when we have deprived them of this title, little need be said of their permanency; for, without that, this is of no value. However, their deficiency in this, too, is so obvious, that the most sanguine in the pursuit of them do not pretend to shut their eyes to it. They are ready to acknowledge that, though acquired with toil, they are lost with ease; and that one moment of mischance may undo the labor of years. They hope, indeed, that themselves shall not exemplify this truth; but such a possibility must itself suffice to destroy all their pretensions to genuine happiness.

Thus, my brethren, have we pursued our interesting search through all the specious advantages of life, and certainly, if reason is to be our guide, with notorious disappointment. They all want either one or both of our indispensable requisites. Where, then, is this primary good to be found? Is it not on earth? or was our strong desire of excellence given us only in mockery? Let us not be surprised, my brethren, if, after all our search, we find it where we least expected it, and discover its genuine features lurking under an humble and unassuming

garb. For this I believe to be the condition of all genuine excellence on earth. It is seldom that which first strikes the sense; it is almost always that which we are apt to pass by without notice. The moral, as the physical world, seems to be covered with delusive appearances; shining talents are not the first in value; ostentatious virtues are almost ever the least estimable. These observations will prepare you to be less disappointed, when I tell you that the complete object of all our search is no other thing than—the fear of God. Yes, let the world exclaim as it pleases against the decision, the primary good of man is, beyond doubt, the fear of God. It is so, even if reason alone were to preside over the investigation. But, first, let us listen to authority; for, in such a question, we stand in need of its support. We are so surrounded by deception, we are so much swayed by our senses, and such slaves of example, that reason herself cannot do better, than rest her testimony on divine authority. And, on so vital a question, our Creator has taken care not to leave us without the benefit of his infallible decision.

There is scarce one of the inspired penmen who has not spoken on the subject. *The fear of God is wisdom itself*, says holy Job; and the Wise Man, the object of all whose sublime writings appears to be a commendation of wisdom, when he comes to define that wisdom as applied to man, uniformly identifies it with *the fear of God.* Ecclesiasticus is full of the subject. *Nothing is better*, says he, *than the fear of God. Riches and strength lift up the heart, but above these is the fear of the Lord. The great man, and the judge, and the mighty is in honor; and there is none greater than he that feareth God. How great is he that findeth wisdom and knowledge, but there is none above him that feareth the Lord. The fear of God hath set itself above all things.* Nothing can be more clear than these authorities, and they are as infallible as they are clear. However, this is a truth which does not refuse the test of reason. Let us, therefore, for our further satisfaction, apply to it those two essential requisites, and we shall find them fully answered.

The fear of God is permanent; for nothing foreign to ourselves can ever take it away. Its seat is in the interior, and no casualty can ever reach it; it owns no sway, but that of our own

free will. By the abuse of this, indeed, we may lose it; but whoever has thoroughly felt its genuine impressions can be in little danger even of this. By its own nature it is a kind of security for itself. But it has another kind of permanency, peculiarly its own. The advantages of the world, were they even permanent through life, could necessarily be so only to its close, and, the moment we touched that fearful boundary, must immediately be torn from us, with a violence proportioned to our past security of enjoyment. Not so the fear of God: it not only attends us faithfully through life, up to the very gates of death, but, having once conducted us safely through, fixes us in a stability which eternity itself cannot shake. So much for its permanency. Is it adequate? Undoubtedly; it is the only thing on this side of eternity of which this can be said. It makes us happy. First, by removing the grand impediment to happiness, viz. the uneasy passion of fear, which we shall find to be the chief ingredient in all our miseries; it is ever the fear of something either in the past, present, or future. Now the fear of God removes this human passion, because, as it has been said with justice, he who fears God, fears nothing else. He fears not fortune: the most that she can threaten is poverty, disgrace, and losses; and how little are these to him who views them all in that great Being who controls them, and permits them only for the ultimate good of those who fear him. He fears not men. From all their violence, injustice, and menaces, he has a secure asylum under the wings of an Almighty Protector, who is sworn to stand by those who put their trust in him. *He hides them in the secret of his countenance, and declares that those who touch them, touch the apple of his eye.* He fears not death itself. That king of terrors, that spoiler of human felicity, that darkener of every worldly prospect, to him lays aside his frowns, or at least so far mitigates them that he views them with tranquillity. He fears, indeed, the consequences of death. He fears judgment, hell, and eternity, because the fear of these is identified with the fear of God; but this fear is tempered with a sweet interior confidence, which renders it perfectly consistent with true happiness; and it is itself the best security against what it dreads. He who truly feared hell, would never become its inhabitant.

Having thus removed the grand impediment to human happiness, the fear of God completes her task, by introducing into the soul that soother of all her pains, that pacifier of all her desires, the love of God. For this, too, we have the authority of inspiration: *The fear of God*, says Ecclesiasticus, *is the beginning of his love.* Not like the base passion of human fear, which can never terminate but in itself, this salutary fear gradually softens and melts into the holy love of God; and, when this is in the soul, no wonder that all her agitations subside into peace. For the human heart was created to love; all that she requires is some grand object equal to her immense capacity. And surely this can be no other than God himself. He is not foreign to, or remote from her, like those other false objects which she attempts in vain to grasp; he is with her; he is in the midst of her; she is ever most intimately united to him. He is not partial or limited, like them; he is immensity itself, and, with all his immensity, he offers himself to her desires, leaving not one without its full gratification. Can any thing be wanting to such a soul? Perhaps only one thing, (an enviable want indeed!) viz. that life may pass rapidly away; that its sluggish moments may accelerate their flight, and bear her quickly to the close of her mortal career; that she may see the breaking down of that partition wall which yet intervenes between her and her sovereign good, and enter on its full and eternal possession. If, my brethren, there be any such thing as happiness on earth, it must be this.

Here, then, my brethren, terminates our search. Behold, we have discovered that primary good, which alone is worthy of our ambition, and can alone console us under the want of every other. It is not health, strength, or beauty; it is not genius, talents, or reputation; it is not riches, honors, or pleasure;—it is, and can be nothing but the fear of God, and its attendant, the love of God. Whatever passion or prejudice may here insinuate, it is impossible, as long as we are reasonable creatures, to come to any other conclusion. The first consequence of so interesting a discovery should be, a rectification of our judgments. How can we any longer enslave them to mere appearances? How can we continue to admire advantages, which put us to the blush the moment we seriously confront

them with our own reason? The second result should be a regulation of our desires. If we watch these, as they rise in our ever-restless imaginations, we shall find that their ignoble flight, almost always terminates upon some or other of the low advantages of this world; advantages, which we can seldom attain, and which, if we could, would be sure to disappoint us. The frequent internal pains, which we suffer from these desires, will now appear to be as unnecessary as they are unprofitable.

But the third and chief effect of our discovery should be a reformation of our conduct. If there is any weight in the reasoning of this discourse, we must from this moment altogether check, or at least very much restrain, our over-eager pursuit of the mistaken advantages of life, and turn all the ardor of our exertions towards the acquisition of the fear of God. And here this invaluable blessing recommends itself to us by another quality, to which temporal advantages can lay not the slightest claim: it is attainable. Were those advantages within the reach of our wishes, more, perhaps, might be said in their favor; but they are totally independent of our will and exertions. Not so the precious fear of God. It is attainable to every good will. For though it is said in Ecclesiasticus, *The fear of God was created with the faithful in the womb, and it walketh with chosen women*, yet, this, doubtless, does not exclude it from general attainment, and particularly does not render it inaccessible to prayer; for God is ever ready *to give his good gift to those who ask it.* Therefore, whoever values his own dearest interest, ought to have ever in his heart and in his mouth, that short but expressive prayer of the prophet: *Pierce, O Lord, my flesh with thy fear.* Nor can he make a better petition for the dearest objects of his solicitude: let him only give his children the fear of God for their inheritance, and he will have fulfilled every duty of the best of parents. This will be their faithful guardian, when he himself shall be taken from them, and will be their steady consolation and support, long after misvalued accomplishments shall have become useless and forgotten.

But prayer must be seconded by our own exertions. There are means of obtaining this blessing, to which God wills us to have recourse. These, obviously, are the reading of the word of God, and meditation on eternal truths; which, assiduously applied, and seconded by divine grace, would effectually stimulate the most indifferent and insensible mind, and put it, at length, in happy possession of this invaluable blessing—the fear of God; the great and primary good of man, the only good on this side of eternity.

Sermon XLIX.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to some, who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others. Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee, standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in a week: I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast saying, O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other, because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.—LUKE xviii. 9–14.

To affirm that pride exists in man previous to his birth, were scarcely inaccurate, for it is the immediate consequence of original defilement, and, as original sin is co-existent with our organization, pride is anterior to our nativity. Thus early engendered in our constitution, it increases during infancy, while the understanding is too weak to comprehend its heinousness; and when the mind attains sufficient strength to discover its hateful features, its power is too great to be subdued without many severe conflicts. The combat is so formidable, that few have the courage to contend, fewer the resolution to persevere. Every day that resistance is deferred, the difficulty increases. As a cancer neglected extends its fatal influence in every direction, beyond the possibility of cure, so pride unrestrained spreads its noxious roots, till extirpation becomes morally impossible. Hence, whoever would eradicate this vice, should commence without delay; unless, perchance, he imagine that the weed,

which is difficult to be uprooted at present, will be exterminated with more facility after being allowed to put forth new roots.

That we may be enabled to form some idea of the enormity of this vice, we will first consider its opposition to God, to our neighbor, and to ourselves, and then view it as exemplified by the Pharisee, in this day's gospel.

Pride is opposed to God, because it seeks to deprive him of his glory, by ascribing excellence to man; whereas man has nothing which he derives not from God. In aiming to deprive God of that glory which is essentially his due, pride is an outrage, a robbery, a sacrilege. It is, moreover, the basest ingratitude. Imagine a wanderer in the desert, spent with fatigue, hunger, and thirst, reclining at the foot of a tower; imagine some person to behold him from the battlement, to be moved at his distress, to let down refreshments, and thus alleviate his sufferings. The wretch receives the refection, without troubling himself even to turn a look of gratitude to his benefactor, deeming himself entitled to such attention. Could you view such a monster without detestation? Man is this traveller, in the desert of the earth, which produces nothing of itself: God looks down from the tower of heaven, pities his helpless creatures, lavishes the choicest gifts of his munificence. The pride of man receives the boon, and refuses to acknowledge any obligation; nay, ascribes to itself the glory of God's favors. Pride is also idolatry, for it worships self instead of God. It is opposed to almost every attribute of the Godhead.

Hence, infinite justice has visited no vice with more terrific punishments. Satan, the admiration of celestial princes, on whom the great Creator looked with singular complacency, as the fairest work of his omnipotence, viewing the excellence of his nature, contemplating his superiority over angels and archangels, appreciating the wonders of his own intelligence, might have retained the advantages which he possessed, rejoiced in the sublimity of his exaltation, received the respect of angels, experienced the esteem of the Omnipotent, had he turned to the source of his excellence, and acknowledged his obligations. He surveyed the heavens with a glance, descried no other spirit of glory equal to his own, forgot his Creator, attributed excellence to himself. In that instant the thunders of wrath shook the

pillars of heaven,—the lightnings of vengeance scorched the archangel to a demon. Ignominiously degraded before the celestial host, the culprit and his abettors were hurled to the abyss of hell, never, never, never to be allowed the slightest alleviation of misery. Can we contemplate this tremendous infliction of chastisement, without a persuasion that the criminality of pride is enormous? If we have imitated Satan, *it is the mercy of the Lord that we also are not consumed.* But punishment deferred is not punishment remitted. If you have been guilty of even a proud thought, condemnation is registered, and it is your interest to have it cancelled by repentance.

Pride is opposed to our neighbour; that is, it is opposed to the well-being of society. Filled with an opinion of self-excellence, it undervalues the estimable qualities of others, depreciates their good actions, or attributes them to unworthy motives. Imagining its own greatness to be enhanced by the degradation of others, and deeming its own elevation of paramount importance, pride seeks opportunities of detecting the weakness of its neighbours, while it carefully conceals its own vices. Hence, detraction and calumny are the natural offspring of pride. From these proceed suspicions, misunderstandings, animosities, contentions, duels, murders. In short, there is not a vice that entails misery on man, but derives its origin from this poisonous source. Pride renders the child impatient of control under the guardians of his inexperience. Partaking the evil propensities of our condition, without sufficient development of intellect to discover the impropriety of indulgence, without sufficient experience to demonstrate the necessity of curbing the depravity of appetite, and of limiting even lawful gratification, he considers restraint to be the dictate of superannuated timidity. He sighs for the termination of subjection, when he promises to demonstrate, practically, that all the cautions and apprehensions of experience may be disregarded with impunity, if not with advantage. Thus does pride neutralize the instructions of youth, deprive age of its reverence, deluding the weakness of childish imbecility into a preference of its own premature conceptions, before the deliberate judgment of experience. We might smile at the folly of the child, if we forgot that this folly is the embryo of a monster that to riper years

persuasively whispers the same contempt of authority. In manhood, pride suggests that submission to superiors is degrading; that reason is competent to direct in religious inquiries; that whatever is above reason is to be rejected; that mysteries are the fabrications of fanaticism, calculated to impose on credulity, but worthy of philosophy's contempt. Thus is Christianity annihilated by pride; for, rejecting mysteries, you must consider revelation a fable. Nay, atheism is the necessary consequence of their rejection.

That pride is opposed to ourselves, evidently follows from what has been already advanced; for, if it be injurious to God; if it draw down his vengeance; and if it be hateful to our neighbour, as producing mischief in society, it must necessarily injure ourselves; unless, perhaps, God will be insulted with impunity, and man will be outraged without resentment. No; pride is detested by God and by man; by God always, whensoever and wheresoever it exists; by man always, except when its disgusting features are concealed, as in to-day's parable, by the mask of hypocrisy. To that most instructive parable I will now direct your attention.

The Pharisee and the publican alike attend the temple of God; both offer their prayers, yet one is justified preferably to the other. And who is the favorite of heaven? Is it the Pharisee, who fasts frequently, who pays tithes scrupulously, who gives alms abundantly? Or is it the publican, whose daily occupation is considered criminal, whose outward conduct displays no conspicuous virtue? Astonishing it seems, that such virtues, as appear in the character of the Pharisee, should not merit justification. But no: the publican returned home justified, rather than the Pharisee. Is there then some secret vice, that renders the good deeds of the Pharisee unavailing? In vain he fasts, in vain he contributes to the altar of God, in vain he gives alms: because he fasts, that he may appear mortified; he pays tithes, that he may appear pious; he gives alms, that he may appear charitable. The praise of *man* is his object, and he hath already received his reward. He has practised no virtue for God's sake; hence God makes him no recompense. Besides the vanity of seeking other men's praises, he has the audacity to praise himself; he has the pride to delight in his own

actions, as if God were not the giver of every good and perfect gift. He arrogates to himself that glory, of which God is ever jealous, and which he will never suffer to be given to another. The proud pharisee considers *himself* the author of his good actions. This idea of self-excellence leads him to despise the rest of men, and particularly the publican, who, with a lowly and broken heart, is lamenting his unworthiness, and imploring the pity of heaven. When we thus examine the two characters, we cannot for a moment doubt which would obtain the gracious notice of the Almighty. *To whom shall I have regard, save to the poor and the lowly, to him that trembleth at my words.* Yes: *God resisteth the proud, but giveth his grace to the humble.*

My brethren, this parable was written for our instruction. Do we never perform our actions in order to attract the esteem of men? Do we fast, purely to humble ourselves before God? Do we perform works of charity, without desiring to be *thought* generous? Do we attend the temple of God, without wishing to be noticed by any but God? Too many, I fear would never give alms, if they thought no one would notice them. Too many would neglect their duties, if they were secure of not being observed. Such persons perform their good actions, either to gain the praise, or to avoid the censure of the world. The opinion of men is their idol; to this they offer their actions, while they refuse to offer them to God. This is the idolatry which marred the best actions of the pharisee. Those who imitate him, imagine themselves just, and despise others. They boast, that they are not as the rest of men,—unjust, adulterers, robbers, murderers. They *are* unjust; they give not their actions to God, but to the world. They *are* adulterers; because they give their souls, which are espoused to Christ, to the world. They *are* robbers; for they rob God of his due. They *are* murderers; for they murder their own souls. Thus, before God, they stand convicted of the most heinous spiritual sins, and yet they presume to thank him they are not like the rest of men. They flatter themselves that they are rich and stand in need of nothing, and they are, before God, poor and wretched, and weak, and blind, and naked. Certain it is, that pride and hypocrisy are the most detestable crimes committed

against heaven; and equally certain is it, that the proudest of men do not imagine themselves at all proud. Yet there is not a more certain sign of a proud heart, than the persuasion that we are not proud. Every man has some degree of this vice; it is the effect of original sin, it is imparted together with that stain, it is born at our birth, it grows with our growth, it ripens with our maturity; it infests us through life, it is scarcely extinguished in the grave. Happy for the proud, if their vice did sleep even in the dust. It pursues them to the judgment-seat. Having lulled them to insensibility during life, it now betrays them at the awful tribunal. Then shall they for the first time reflect, and exclaim, in the words of Scripture: *What has pride profited us?* But, alas, the thought comes too late, they have suffered themselves to go blindfolded to perdition; their doom is sealed; repentance is fruitless.

My brethren, we are in their former condition: we shall follow them to their present calamity, unless we begin to reflect sooner than they did. What, then, must we do? We must consider, that whatever we have of good comes from God, that whatever we have of evil comes from our own corruption. The first reflection will teach us to give the glory of all good deeds solely to God, and thus prevent our being puffed up with self-conceit; while the contemplation of our own baseness will produce sentiments of humility. Humility, once conceived in our hearts, will be a solid foundation for every virtue. And the higher we wish to rear the edifice of virtue, the deeper must we sink the foundations of humility. In order to preserve the precious treasure of this chief of virtues, we must not only think truly of our own littleness, but we must be willing that others should think meanly of us. For that man cannot be esteemed better than a hypocrite, who, thinking himself mean, desires others to form a different judgment. Let not our actions, then, be performed to gain the praise of men. A good man knows that he can gain more for his virtues than the applause of his equals; he is content with nothing less than the approbation of heaven. A good man desires to conceal the treasure of his virtues, lest he should be robbed of what he highly prizes. Let us, then, conceal our virtues, that we may preserve them. Let us be anxious for every opportunity of

doing good, that our heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, may reward us openly. Then, indeed, will it be glorious to have our virtues displayed, for eternity, before the angels of God!

But does not good example require us to let our light so shine before men, that others, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven? This is perfectly true, nor is it any ways inconsistent with what I have advanced. We are bound to give good example; but this must be for *God's* honor, not for our *own*. If example require us to exercise outward virtues, humility demands that we should not wish them to be noticed as coming from *us*: we must never desire that men may esteem, or praise us, for our good deeds. We must desire, that they may imitate us, without noticing *whom* they imitate.

Hitherto, I have treated of pride in general: there remains one point, which comes home to very many, perhaps to us all: I mean that blind pride which makes us overlook our sins. Many approach the sacraments, after living their whole lives in the habit of vices odious to God, without imagining that *they* have committed any serious offence. One will overlook habits of lying, as a trifling failing, not remembering that *lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.* Another will live, year after year, in the violation of the Sunday, breaking the fasts appointed, and neglecting his spiritual duties. Another will openly lay aside religion and morality, and, on his dying bed, will tell the priest that he has nothing to trouble his conscience. "I have worked hard, I have paid my way: I have cheated no man." Yes, this is but too often the only confession of abandoned sinners, at the moment when hell gapes wide to devour them. So blind with pride, they cannot discern a fault in themselves, though they have lived in rebellion to God and his church for ten, twenty, it may be for fifty years. If there be such a person here, I will tell him, with the Scripture, *If we say that we have no sin, we are liars, and the truth is not in us. The just man falleth seven times in the day.* And does the wretch, who neglects every duty to God, flatter himself that he does not fall even as often as the just man? He has become familiar with iniquity, his heart is callous to remorse, his understanding is without the light of grace. He consummates his

wickedness, by proudly considering himself just. The cause of this desperate presumption is the habitual neglect of examining his heart, the habitual neglect of grace. Its punishment is greater obstinacy in sin, followed by final impenitence. Behold the disastrous effects of looking upon ourselves as just, and despising others. Let us, with the publican, acknowledge ourselves sinners. Let us do all that God requires, and still acknowledge ourselves unprofitable servants. My brethren, not one of us has done all that is commanded; let us, then, join the publican, with a broken and lowly heart exclaiming: *O God, be merciful to me a sinner!* Thus shall we also return home justified.

Sermon XLV.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost.

CHARACTER OF OUR SAVIOUR.

He hath done all things well.—Mark vii. 37.

Men are prone to admiration; fond as they are of themselves and full of self-esteem, they can still find leisure and inclination to dwell on the excellences of others; and it has ever formed one of their most pleasing and congenial occupations. At one time they turn their eye on living worth, and, provided only it be beyond their own sphere, willingly give up their souls to its admiration, and exhaust themselves in its praise. They seem ambitious to see their common nature carried to its highest elevation, they seem to be looking out for some transcendent excellence, which may at length fill all their ideas, and present them with a perfect model of their kind. How surprising is it, that they should overlook the only character in which they can ever hope to see their wishes realized! Need I say to whom I allude? The Saviour of the world doubtless numbered this among the various views for which he appeared among us: he came not only to raise our nature from the ground, but to show it in its last perfection. And yet, as I have insinuated, the perfect pattern is overlooked. For who, among the general mass of men, on being challenged to produce the favorite object of his admiration, would ever think of naming this. How few, even among those who boast of being enlightened by the true faith, will be found of better discernment! How many, at the hearing of his august name, feel even less veneration than at the mention of some pagan hero or sage of antiquity! To counteract this perverted feeling, no less at variance with sound

judgment than religion, to hold up to view this superlative but neglected portrait, is my exalted purpose this day.

All human excellence of character is one of these two kinds: it is either admirable, or amiable; composed of such qualities as dazzle and excite admiration, or of such as attract and procure affection. Each kind has its advantages, but the innate pride of man generally prompts him to affect the former, though no exertions of his own can ever secure them, while he overlooks the latter, which are always in some degree within his reach. The supreme point, however, the miracle of humanity, is to unite both kinds; to be admirable and at the same time amiable, to shine and dazzle with the great endowments, and yet not bury in their blaze the mild lustre of the more attractive virtues. If ever this wonderful union was realized in our nature, it was certainly in the Saviour of the world. On this plan, then, I mean to proceed, in my design of elevating your ideas of this incomparable character. First, I will consider him as he was great, then as he was amiable; first those features which excite our admiration, then those which interest our feelings and affections.

The endowments of character best calculated to excite admiration are wisdom, eloquence, and power; of these, wisdom is undoubtedly the first, though by superficial man not always esteemed so. Of this leading excellence it is difficult to select examples in the Saviour of the world; not from their rarity, but from their abundance and variety. Indeed, every action of his was a dictate of wisdom, every thing he said bore its sterling impression, and thence it has been remarked, that the keenest and bitterest enemies of Christianity have never yet ventured to point out a single flaw in the character of its founder; for near two thousand years his life and doctrine have lain open for inspection, and, of all men, he alone has yet found no censurer. What consummate wisdom does not this announce! I proceed to point out some more particular instances. I have not time to dwell on that celebrated form of prayer, which, without study or effort, he poured from his lips, which, the more it is investigated, appears the more wonderful, which in a few words comprehends all the wants of all men; so simple as to be level to the lowest intellect, yet so sublime as to outreach the loftiest.

I shall chiefly dwell on some of his answers to the insidious interrogations of his adversaries, for these are the occasions which most severely try the human powers.

The first occasion was this:—On coming to the temple, fired with heavenly zeal, he had indignantly expelled from the house of God the buyers and sellers, who profaned it. Astonished at his boldness, the Pharisees put to him the following question: *Tell us, by what authority dost thou these things?* The question was, doubtless, a studied one, and might be easily shown to be not very convenient of reply. But let us rather attend to his answer, and observe the ease with which he meets his wily adversaries. *Jesus, answering, said unto them: I will also ask you one word, which if you will tell me, I will also tell you, by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from whence was it, from heaven or from men?* Simple as it seems, the question was decisive. *For they thought within themselves, saying: If we shall say from heaven, he will say to us, Why, then, did you not believe him? And if we shall say from men, we are afraid of the multitude; for all held John as a prophet. And, answering Jesus, they said, We know not. And he said to them: Neither do I tell you, by what authority I do these things.*

Another occasion. The Pharisees, having previously consulted among themselves, and carefully prepared their point, sent their disciples to address him in the following manner, concealing their dark purpose in a preface of compliment: *Master, we know that thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man; for thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what dost thou think? is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?* What studied artifice! The dilemma appears inevitable: for, if he replies in the affirmative, he is obnoxious to public hatred, the Roman taxes being particularly odious to the Jews: if in the negative, they immediately charge him with opposition to public authority; and there appears no refuge from the alternative. An ancient sage, a Simonides, thus publicly and unexpectedly interrogated, would have required time for the solution, or have evaded it by an ambiguous reply. See with what ease, and, at the same time, with what temper and with what dignity, this

master of wisdom meets and disarms the subtle aggression. *Show me, says he, the coin of the tribute. And they offered him a penny. But Jesus saith to them, Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him, Cæsar's. Then he saith to them*—breathless, no doubt, with malicious expectation—*render, therefore, to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's. And when they heard this they wondered, and leaving him went their way.* Observe how, in a few words, he at once silences his antagonists, and yet calmly dictates to mankind one of the most invaluable of moral lessons! *Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's; and to God the things which are God's.*

For the first of his admirable qualities, I think, I have now said enough. I will proceed, then, to his eloquence.

As soon as he appeared in public life, his admirable discourses drew crowds after him, even out of their own country, and into deserts, making them forget their common necessities.

What species of eloquence is there of which he has not left us the noblest specimens in his public discourses; not indeed of that meretricious and misnamed eloquence which aims only at the amusement or admiration of an audience, but of that genuine kind which goes direct to the heart, and moves and sways the man. With what a noble simplicity, force, and majesty does he break forth into his celebrated didactic discourse on the mount: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* With what energy does he proceed? *Amen, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one iota or one tittle of the law shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.—If thy eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.—Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them.—Judge not, and you shall not be judged.—The people*, says the evangelist, *were in admiration at his doctrine; for he was teaching as one having power, and not as the scribes.*

What ingenuity, what beauty, what pathos in his parables! What a touching picture is the prodigal son! How moving and powerful is the scene displayed to us in the rich glutton! How exact, how expressive are the different lessons conveyed to us in the sower, the master of the vineyard, the lord of the harvest!

If we look for the sublime, what can equal his description of the last day, when, sitting with his disciples on Mount Olivet over against the temple, he unfolded to them, at their request, the destinies of later times? *Tell us, they say, when these things shall be. You shall hear of wars and rumors of wars,—Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes. Now these are the beginning of sorrows.—And immediately after the tribulation of these days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall be moved.—As the lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.—And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man, coming in the clouds of heaven, with great power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds thereof.—Amen, I say to you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be done: heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away.* What a description! assuredly the mouth of man had never yet uttered such language.

Were any further proof required of his all-powerful eloquence, I might mention that remarkable occasion when the Jews sent purposely to apprehend him as he was addressing the multitude. Their emissaries approached, full of their nefarious purpose; but they had no sooner joined the crowd than, overpowered by his words, they stood riveted to the spot, and forgot their errand; and when asked, on their return, by their disappointed masters, why they had not brought him, could only answer, *Never did man speak like this man.*

3. But I hasten to the third extraordinary attribute which I mentioned in his character, his power. By this I mean individual and personal power, not that adventitious and borrowed influence which is derived from rank or station; for this is rather the aggregate of other men's exertions, than the property of the individual possessor.

Of the numerous exemplifications of this attribute in our Redeemer, which crowd the pages of his life, I have leisure to select two only, but these so remarkable as fully to supersede

all others. He and his disciples had embarked in a vessel on the sea of Genesareth. *And behold*, says the evangelist, *a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep.* These are the few particulars given to us by the sacred historian; but, in order to do justice to the scene, and to the prodigy which followed, we must expand the circumstances a little more fully; we must bring ourselves to the spot, and, by the aid of imagination and of that experience of the elements which few can be without, represent it to the life; the winds raging in all their fury, and, with their terrific roarings, appalling the most resolute:—roused by their fury, the mass of water heaving in tremendous mountains, and breaking over the staggering vessel, threatening every instant to bury it in the deep:—the heavens, too, adding their terrors, the thunder breaking in awful peals, and the frightful lightning shooting its terrific glare, at intervals, over the scene.

It is well known how such a situation is apt to subdue the stoutest heart, and to sink every other feeling in the sense of present danger. Yet the terrified apostles find their Master asleep at the awful hour, unconscious, it would seem, of the roar of elements and the wild concussion of nature. Rising with the greatest calmness, he upbraided their fears, and, looking abroad into the troubled scene, *commanded*, says one of the evangelists, *the winds and the sea, and there came a great calm. Rising up*, says another, *he rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still.* Instantly the wind was hushed, the waters lay in a smooth level, and nature was calm and silent! Who would not have been amazed at such a sight? *The men wondered*, says St. Matthew, *saying, What manner of man is this? for the winds and the sea obey him.*

The other instance of his power shall be of another kind, but equally striking. It took place towards the close of his public career, on occasion of the death of one of his intimate friends. Martha and Mary, sisters of the deceased, had, during the last sickness of their brother, invited their common friend to come to their relief, but he had delayed till it seemed to be too late; and the neglected and apparently forgotten Lazarus had now lain four days in his grave. He had not acted thus by chance, and, tranquil in the consciousness of what he was going to per-

form, he proceeded with some of his disciples to the tomb. The afflicted yet still faintly hoping sisters had repaired to the spot, and, on their affectionately complaining, that, if he had been there, their brother had not died, received for answer, *Your brother shall rise again.* The scene was become interesting in the extreme. Numbers had flocked to the spot, some to share the grief of the two sisters, others in expectation of some extraordinary event, and not a few from a malicious curiosity, which would on all occasions scrutinize the actions of this illustrious character.

He first mingles his tears with those of the weeping sisters and their sympathizing friends; and then, approaching the tomb, which was a cave, with a stone laid over it, he orders the obstruction to be removed. And the stone was taken away. We may conceive what must be, at this moment, the feelings of the spectators, their intense gaze, their breathless expectation. Doubtless, at the removing of the stone, the four days' inhabitant of the tomb gave full evidence of what he now was. The napkin, indeed, shrouds his disorganized features; but the issuing odor of death plainly speaks the advanced progress of dissolution. Can he, who here presents himself, undo the work of death, and reanimate so disordered a mass?

An awful stillness of suspense reigns around; the opened tomb and its inhabitant are scarcely more silent than the crowd. Lifting up, for a moment, his heart and his eyes to heaven, then turning them down on the yawning grave, he cries with a loud voice: *Lazarus, come forth.* At the word, an instant commotion is heard below; a figure starts up in winding bands, and Lazarus, the four-days corrupted Lazarus, stands up, sound and perfect, before the astonished crowd! *Loose him,* says the speaker, calm amid the general perturbation, *loose him, and let him go.* My friends, had we been present at such a scene, with what eyes should we have turned to the author of the wonder! with what feelings should we have looked upon the extraordinary personage! Assuredly, such powers, dignified and graced, as we have seen, with such wisdom and eloquence, must be more than sufficient to fix and engross our admiration.

Therefore, I now proceed to sketch, however inadequately, the amiable side of this all-perfect character. It was not with-

out design, that I placed first before your eyes the admirable qualities of the Saviour of men; nothing could be better calculated to set off and exalt those less assuming features, which form the counterpart of the picture. Real greatness exercises, at all times, a powerful influence over the human soul; but, when softened and embellished by the milder excellences, it becomes irresistible, and makes a willing captive of every beholder.

This union, however, this happy temperament of endowments so different, is rare indeed in man,—to embrace both extremities seems beyond his reach. Hence, many have been called great, and many have been, in a qualified sense, really admirable; but to be admirable, as I have observed, and at the same time amiable, dazzling yet attractive, commanding yet winning in character, the first of men in powers and excellences, yet on a level with the last in presence and demeanor, was a character reserved for him who styles himself the Son of Man.

The first amiable trait I shall point out, is his affability and sweetness to all ranks and conditions. The gospel is crowded with instances. Indeed, his condescension in this way went so far as to draw upon him the appellation of the friend of publicans and sinners. But there is one instance, too remarkable not to be more particularly noticed. A woman, so notorious for her irregularities as to be publicly known by the name of the Sinner, breaks in abruptly on his convivial hours, casts herself at his feet, and begins officiously to anoint them and wipe them with her hair. What philosopher would not have spurned such approaches? He, a far other judge of human nature, reads in her heart the motive of her conduct, kindly permits her humble assiduity, defends and justifies her from the rash censure of her observers, pardons at once all her crimes, and dismisses her in peace and consolation. Great as he is, he mingles familiarly with the crowd, and makes himself easy and accessible to all. They invite him to their cities and their houses, and he accepts the invitation; the worldly-minded Gerasenians request him to retire from their territories, and he as obligingly complies. The crowds meet him at all points, and he never shuns them; they fatigue him with their interrogations, often inept and rude, and he refuses not to answer; they importune him with applications for relief, and, as the evangelist says, *he heals all.*

To finish this interesting feature in his character, I have only to represent him, as he is described by three of the evangelists, sitting among a number of little children, whom their fond parents had gathered about him. Ordinary minds easily, and even with pleasure, condescend to the simplicity and innocence of that tender age; but great characters are not so supple, nor so easily stoop from that higher sphere of objects in which their powers move. And the illustrious character before us was actually, at the time of the intrusion, entertaining his audience on the grandest and most important topics. Yet, so far from being displeased at their apparently unseasonable introduction, he rebukes, and, as the evangelist words it, is indignant at his apostles for repressing them. He interrupts his discourse to receive them, or rather diverts it immediately upon them, declaring them the best exemplifications of his doctrine, and setting up their innocent age as a model to his hearers; and then, calling them about him, he honors them with his benedictions.

While we admire his affability to strangers, we must not overlook the friendship, generosity, tenderness, compassion, and forbearance which marked his whole conduct towards his adherents. They were not chosen characters, or, if they were, they seemed chosen from among the most uncouth and imperfect of men. Their ideas were totally different from his own; they seemed, at first, scarcely to have an idea or an inclination in common with him. They were dull, ignorant, petty-minded, selfish, and ambitious. Accordingly, we see them at every turn mistaking his meaning, disputing among themselves, jealous of each other, and quarrelling about precedency. Yet we do not find, that, in all his intercourse with them, a single word ever escaped him of impatience. He constantly defended and excused them, patiently bore with their rudeness and ignorance, gently reproved their failings, overlooked their weakness, even when it brought disgrace on their beloved master, and while he gradually fashioned them to his designs, silently waited in expectation of another day, which was to transform them into other men. They were yet far from this happy change when he made them his celebrated farewell address at his last supper; which all, who would see a perfect model of a friendship at once ten

der and solid, should read in all its details. Here, he truly fulfils the great law of friendship, by putting himself of a level with them; if, indeed, it be not more than this, to commence, as he did, by the amazing condescension of exemplifying his own lessons in washing their feet. The near prospect of his separation seems to call up all his tenderness for them, and he now unlocks without reserve the treasured mysteries of his love. We do not read that he embraced them:—no, but how much more than this do we read!—that he made himself over to them all in a new measure, that he gave them a token hitherto unheard of among men, that, in short, he wonderfully realized that union of love which human endearments may testify, but can never effect. To the enlightened Christian, this bare allusion is sufficient. Having warmed their hearts by this extraordinary pledge, he then sits down familiarly among them, and gives vent to the effusions of his tenderness. At one time he speaks as their loved and revered master: *My little children, yet a little while I am with you. Behold, I give you a new commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. I will come again and take you to myself, I will not leave you orphans, but I will come to you: in that day you shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me and I in you. As the Father hath loved me, so I also have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that he lay down his life for his friends;* (the very sacrifice he was on the eve of making;) then, as if catching up the word he had just dropped, he improves it into a still farther extension of his familiarity: *Yes, I will not now call you servants; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you all that I have heard of my Father. You now indeed are sorrowful, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you. Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name; ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs; the hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs; then you shall ask in my name, and I say not, that I will ask the Father for you, for he himself loveth you, because you have loved me.* Astonished and overpowered by these loving effusions, his disciples cried out in transport, that now indeed he spoke plainly to them, that now they implicitly credited all

that he had ever told them, and gave up to him without reserve their understandings, their hearts, and their lives.

Perhaps, my brethren, I might here close the portrait, and, with your full approbation, pronounce it complete: but we must not forget yet one point of view, in which all human perfection must necessarily stand, before it can receive the last conclusive suffrage of our love and admiration. It is easy for virtue to support itself in the calm and sunshine of life; but it is the storm, the season of trial, of danger, and distress, that thoroughly tries it, and gives it its last and most powerful interest. And here, how much do we stand in need of a pattern; how egregiously have the most boasted characters of antiquity failed here! We see the revered Cato answering his antagonists reproach for reproach; we behold the admired Socrates thinking it virtue to frown defiance on his judges. How different a model shall we see in this great prototype of human nature!

When his enemies, now become desperate, approach undisguised to make him their prisoner, he offers no resistance, but merely suffers himself to be led along to the iniquitous court that awaited him. This is the first scene on which I would fix your attention. You cannot but take an interest in so illustrious an individual; you have been struck with his greatness, you have been charmed with his goodness, and cannot, without deep concern, behold so much excellence, thus ignominiously arraigned before an unjust and passionate tribunal, which, insensible to all his worth, and neglecting even the forms of justice, assails him immediately on his entrance with loud and indecent clamor. He calmly and meekly offers a reply: when what must be your indignation to see the meanest of the bystanders, a very menial, officiously advance and inflict a disgraceful buffet on his sacred face! Such an occurrence is rare, perhaps single, in the history of human justice, and equally unexampled is his behaviour. I do not ask, what one of the men of honor, as they are called, would have replied to such an insult: but what would real and all but perfect virtue have done? Doubtless, it must have been disconcerted at such a moment, and have sunk under the cruel outrage. Let us ask even what the temperate and gray-haired sage would have done? We can scarcely think but that his aged blood would have boiled afresh in his veins, and that, rely-

ing on the sympathy of all around him, he would have thought it necessary, even if he forgave the offender, to repress such unworthy insolence by a frown or a reproach. Far from all this, our all-perfect model meekly turns himself to the unworthy wretch, and thus gently expostulates with him: *If I have spoken ill, why dost thou not show it? if well, why dost thou strike me?* Entire silence might have been ambiguous: if he must speak, is it possible to conceive words better chosen than these? After such an outrage, you can hardly be surprised at any thing which follows.

The next scene presents him to us under the hands, not of one, but of many insulters. The wicked court, breaking up from its iniquitous deliberations, leaves him, by an incredible insensibility and neglect, to the sports of its servile and mercenary dependants. These, worthy in every respect of their masters, eagerly surround him: they vociferate, they scoff at him, in all the ways in which low-bred malice is so ingenious. They proceed to buffet him, they blindfold him, they pluck his hair and beard, and, with the height of insult, even spit on his majestic visage! What heart, even of ordinary temper, but must have bled at such a spectacle of greatness and majesty so abused and degraded! of amiableness and sweetness so trodden upon and despised! Amid such extremity of outrage, almost any thing might have been pardoned him: resentment itself would almost have seemed graceful; or, at least, had he given vent to his feelings in speechless weeping, any one present must have approved and sympathized with him. Yes, thus would have acted ordinary nature;—this great master sets us a different model. To their scoffs and abusive language he answers not a word: here the mildest would have been thrown away; he, therefore, preserves a tenacious silence, *as a dumb man, not opening his mouth.* More than this, he preserves even all the serenity of his countenance; all their violences and insults do not discompose its settled majesty. But, what is hardest of all, he even retains, amidst all this extremity of outrage and provocation, all the tranquillity and all the charity of his heart. This, indeed, is hard to conceive; and he gives us, certainly, at this sad hour, no uttered assurance of it: but wait a little, and you shall soon hear it, in a form the most authentic, from his own

mouth. For let us come to the extremity. You have seen him under contempt and insult; now observe him under cruelty and torment, or rather under the extremity of both united. To be brief, the sentence is pronounced, the fatal instrument of death is produced, and him whom you have admired, captivating crowds by his wisdom and eloquence, and controlling the elements by his voice, whose very word was mildness and gentleness, and whose whole deportment is condescension and sweetness, him they nail, hands and feet, to the ignominious cross!

And what is their demeanor, when they have completed the atrocious deed, and time, one would think, and satiety would have cooled their passion? They stand by, surveying his sufferings with unfeeling curiosity and savage satisfaction. They shake their heads at him in derision; they scoff at the wonders they have seen him so often display, and mock and defy the very power to which they owe their impunity! Remembering, how keen an edge insult gives to pain; and that all antiquity, Jewish as well as pagan, had sanctioned revenge; let us watch his conduct at this trying hour. For an interval, he allows them to indulge their passion, and to vent their malice in every form of insult and reproach: he makes no other reply than a deep silence. Then, at length, watching his opportunity when a pause would allow him to be heard, he opens his mouth, and utters his feelings in words never to be forgotten,—oh! how hard must that heart be which can resist their melting influence: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* Oh! astonishing and irresistible words! To have merely not resented, would seem more than human; and yet he cries, *Forgive them.* What excuse could their desperate malice admit of? And yet he ingeniously finds one: *they know not what they do.* And, to show the sincerity of his appeal, he makes use of the tenderest of titles: *Father—Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.*

Here I close my sketch of this incomparable character. What, then, in conclusion, is the purport of this discourse? First, to show the blindness of men, who search for human excellence, and overlook its brightest pattern. Secondly, to reprobate and expose the weakness of those unworthy Christians, who are ashamed of their Saviour, who feel no veneration for his sacred

name, and would almost blush to find it in their mouths; and to show, that they are no less irrational than irreligious; no less condemned at the bar, now so much appealed to, of reason and taste, than of revelation and faith. Thirdly, to justify, to cherish, and to encourage the piety of the true Christian, who glories in testifying his respect for his Redeemer, and to show him that the best feelings of his nature accord with his religious practice. Lastly, to contribute, as far as my humble efforts may hope, to revive in some degree that admiration, that love, and gratitude so justly due, yet, in these days of tepidity, so much forgotten, towards that great and divine personage, to whom we owe so much, to whom we owe every thing. Let us then all conclude with the inspired words of the apostle: *In the name of Jesus let every knee bow, of things in heaven, of things on earth, and of things under the earth; and let every tongue confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.*

Sermon XLV.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON FAITH AND CHARITY.

Now if the ministration of death, engraven with letters upon stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which is made void; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather in glory.—2 Cor. iii. 7, 8.

God spoke to man immediately after his creation; he spoke to him after his fall, and continued from time to time to speak to him in every age, till our Saviour, by himself and his apostles, completed the series of revelations, by making known all whatever God intended should at any time be published to the world.

Now, since God cannot speak in vain, it is evident, that every tittle of what he has at any time said, was uttered for some important purpose: and it is equally evident, that those who frustrate this purpose, act as if they did not hear his words, and consequently are guilty of the heinous crime of insulting his divine Majesty, and of resisting his will. Wherefore, by hearing the words of God, our Saviour, in various passages of the gospel, means corresponding to the purpose for which they were spoken: and we cannot be suprised, that hearing them in this sense should be laid down by him as the criterion, by which the elect can be distinguished from the reprobate. *He that is of God heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.*

But two very natural questions here arise: first, What is the purpose for which God has spoken? and, secondly, What are we to do, that this purpose may not be frustrated in our regard?

To the first of these questions I answer, that indisputably the grand end of all revelation, as far as we are concerned, is the sanctification of our souls. *This is the will of God*, says St. Paul, *your sanctification*. To the second question I answer, that we cannot otherwise sanctify our souls, or render them agreeable to God, than by believing all that he has revealed, and by practising all that he has commanded. By the first, we subject to him our understandings, and by the second our wills; and thus the whole man becomes obedient to him, and consequently pleasing in his divine eyes. This double duty St. Paul expresses by the words, *Faith working by charity;* and this double duty I propose for the subject of this day's discourse, in which I shall endeavor to show, first, that we cannot be pleasing in the eyes of God without faith, by which word I mean a submission of our minds on God's authority to all whatever he has revealed; and, secondly, that faith is of no avail to us without charity, or the love of God above all things. This subject, my brethren, is particularly important in the present times, when faith is scarcely to be found on earth, and when the charity of many has waxed cold. There is an opinion publicly avowed by thousands, and virtually entertained even by some Catholics, that creeds are matters of no importance. The abettors of this opinion are called, in the language of the day, men of liberal sentiments, and those who hold it not are stigmatized as narrow-minded bigots, who, if they could, would check what is vauntingly called the march of intellect, and replunge the world into barbarism. Yes, there are numbers in the present age, who fancy themselves qualified to sit in judgment on God himself. They can fix the precise range of the divine attributes, and determine how far their exercise can be conducted without imperfection. They watch, with peculiar jealousy, the economy of God, in regard to the moral agency of his creatures. Being persuaded that his notions coincide exactly with their own on the subject of government, they cannot be induced to believe that he can establish any order of things which to them appears unreasonable. Thus it is, that these contemptible glow-worms, flittering down the dark lane of life, imagine that the sparks, which they emit from their little wings, are equal to the splendors of the Divinity itself. How exquisitely ridiculous is their

pride! They cannot comprehend even the objects which surround them in this visible creation, and yet they flatter themselves that they understand the ways of God! In opposition to these self-conceited things, I shall now proceed to establish my first point, and endeavor to show, briefly indeed and therefore very imperfectly, that faith is not of trivial importance, but essentially connected with the sanctification of our souls.

We learn from the book of Genesis, that, when God had created man, he placed him in the garden of Eden, to keep and cultivate it, and commanded him, saying: *Of every tree of Paradise thou shalt eat. But of the tree of the knowlege of good and evil thou shalt not eat: for, in whatever day thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.* We learn from the same divine record, that Satan, to induce Eve to transgress this commandment, said to her: *No, you shall not die the death; for God doth know, that, in whatever day you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

Here we see that God did not leave man to his own discretion, but subjected him, as soon as created, to his own immediate control, and that this control was exercised, in the first place, over his understanding. *But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,* says God to Adam, *thou shalt not eat.* We here see, likewise, that Satan's grand effort was levelled against this last-mentioned control, and that Adam's perdition was principally owing to an endeavor to shake this off. *No,* said the crafty serpent, *you shall not die the death; for God doth know, that, in whatever day you shall eat thereof, you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

But, there is a circumstance in this relation to which I wish to call your particular attention. The tree, selected by God for Adam's trial, grew in Paradise, that is to say, was a production of this earth, and though it was called the tree of knowledge, it did not communicate any superior wisdom to our first parents, but, on the contrary, involved them in the most dreadful mental darkness. What was this mysterious tree intended to signify? Why, indisputably, besides having other significations, it was the type of our natural reason, the only one of nature's productions which bears the name of knowledge,

and consequently we are here taught that man is forbidden to recur to this source for the supernatural science of good and evil.

Thus we see portrayed, succinctly indeed, but clearly and beautifully, in the very beginning of the Book of Genesis, the nature of divine Faith, as well as of the opposite vice of heresy: and we find, that, as faith was the very first precept of God to man, so heresy was the first sin which the latter committed. For, what is faith, but an humble submission of man to the control which God is pleased to exercise over his understanding, by commanding him to believe, on his authority, whatever he has revealed? and what is heresy, but a resistance to this control, by a rejection of some of those truths by which it is exercised?

It is not for us to inquire why God has established this supernatural control over the human understanding. For, *who*, says St. Paul, *hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?* It is sufficient for us to know, that all God's conduct with respect to man is the effect of infinite wisdom and infinite goodness. However, the ways of the Lord, in this particular, have been fully justified, not only in themselves, but even to us; for the history of the human mind affords melancholy evidence how incapable it is, when left to itself, of guiding us, with respect to good and evil. What dreadful consequences have not uniformly followed from man's setting aside divine authority, and relying on his natural reason for this knowledge? Look back on the world during the first ages; view the state of all mankind, with the exception of those who were guided by revelation. You will find, not only the greatest confusion in the ideas of right and wrong, but the creature placed by man's reason in the throne of the Creator; nay, temples raised and altars blazing to Satan himself, and to every abomination which he inspires. Those nations, where reason was most cultivated, whose progress in human sciences was such that their works are even now the standards of excellence, were of all others the most deplorably ignorant in the science of good and evil! Yes, I need not refer you to the wilds of ancient Scythia or Germany for the effects which reason, left to itself, has produced! Egypt, the mother of the sciences,

Greece, which nurtured them to perfection, Rome, which considered them the most glorious of her conquests, distinguished themselves by religious absurdity, even more than by human literature, and were abandoned without remorse—nay, with self-complacency—to practices, which we cannot read of without horror, or utter without a blush. In a word, as all mankind, except the descendants of Abraham, had sought the knowledge of good and evil from the tree of human reason; so, with the same exception, there was not a nation in the whole world, that was not buried in the most profound ignorance on these subjects.

Pursuing the history of the human mind from the most remote ages, through those which have elapsed since the time of our Saviour, we shall still find man the sport of every error, whenever he has laid aside the divine authority, and gone to his own reason for the knowledge of good and evil. Count over, if you can, the sects into which mankind has been divided during these ages, examine the monstrous doctrines that have been successively taught; and you will find that reason has appeared even more feeble than in the earlier ages; as if time had only added the weakness of old age to its natural infirmity. I am aware that many will expect the present age at least to be excepted from this heavy censure. This, they will exclaim, is the age of reason, these pre-eminently enlightened times!

Ah, Christians, turn your eyes upon France, Germany, England; nay, towards any quarter of this eminently enlightened Europe. You may not behold formal pagans, but you will behold innumerable beings in whom the human mind is even more degraded: you will behold infidels! Reason, in pagans, had a certain remnant of dignity, because it preserved those general fundamental principles of right and wrong which are natural to it, however much it erred in their application. But in modern infidels she has lost, I may say, her very essence. In them, her light is not obscured, as it was in pagans: it is quite extinct. The man who can believe that good and evil, right and wrong, have exactly the same meaning,—the man who can believe there is no God, or, if any, that he is entitled to no worship from his creatures, has surely effected the utmost perversion of the human intellect,—has, in fact, ceased to be rational. And is this the age of reason? These, enlightened times? When we see idiots,

like these attracting the gaze, the admiration, the veneration of the world? The darkest age, we ought rather to call it; and we ourselves are involved in its night if we are not convinced that the more pertinacious man's efforts are to assert the absolute sufficiency and independence of reason, the more perplexed and debased does reason become.

Thus we see justified the ways of God to man in the creation; thus has time unfolded to us the wisdom which dictated to our first parents the prohibition to eat the forbidden fruit. When, therefore, the Son of God came down from heaven to remedy the evils which Adam's resistance to this prohibition had brought on the world, and restore man to his Creator's favor, was he not to remove the prime cause of these evils, and renew the primitive and fundamental condition of that favor? Was God to yield up to man's pride and disobedience the control upon which he had originally insisted, and which, in his infinite wisdom, he had judged necessary for him? No! man was to regain the favor of God by a conduct the very opposite of that by which he had lost it. He had lost this favor by seeking the knowledge of good and evil from a natural source: he could recover it only by a feeling acknowledgment that God alone is the teacher of this science. He had lost it by listening to Satan rather than to God, and by blasphemously thinking that the former had spoken the truth, the latter had uttered a lie: he could not regain it, unless in the very first place he did homage to God's supreme veracity, by believing, on his word, whatever he should reveal. Finally, he had been justly deprived of God's favor, because, not being content with the condition of a mere man, he had aspired to be like a god in knowledge: he could never enjoy this blessing more till he had abjured this presumption; till, by submitting his mind to truths above its comprehension, he had confessed the infinite difference between man and God, and the total inability of any creature, however excellent, to fathom the divine mind. Thus, as pride of intellect had been the prime cause of his ruin, humility of intellect was to be the beginning of his good. As unbelief had been his first sin, faith was to be the preliminary to his justification.

It were easy to support this doctrine by scriptural proof. I might expatiate on the words spoken by our Divine Redeemer

to his apostles, when he sent them to preach the gospel, most expressly and most solemnly declaring, that those, who believed not should be condemned. But this would carry me beyond my limits. I shall therefore finish this part of my discourse, with a few observations on what St. Paul says, in the epistle to the Hebrews: *Without faith it is impossible to please God.*

Can words be more clear, more energetic, more decisive? Spend your days and nights in prayer, says he to those who have not faith; keep your Sabbaths with Jewish precision; peruse the Scriptures till you have committed them to memory; speak with the utmost reverence of God; show every respect to your parents; wrong no man in his person, property, or good name; be liberal, nay profuse, to the poor; keep your bodies from impurity, and bridle even your thoughts in regard to your neighbor's wife and goods: in a word, perform what acts of piety you please; still, you are not pleasing to God, because you have not faith. You have not the foundation, and therefore are laboring in vain to raise a superstructure. You are offering sacrifice, but, like Saul, want obedience, without which no sacrifice can be accepted. God has spoken; but you have refused to hear. He, who can do nothing in vain, has selected from his treasure of knowledge certain truths to be communicated to man for ends wise and salutary; but you have rejected at least some of these truths, and thus, as far as lay in your power, and as far as you are concerned, have frustrated the purposes of revelation. One grand end which God had in view in revealing these sacred truths, was to keep you sensible of your ignorance. He displayed before you these partial rays of his divinity, that you might learn, from their overwhelming splendor, the weakness of your mortal eye and its inability to receive within its vision the grand orb of light from which they emanate. But you have refused this lesson. Rather than suffer humiliation, you have turned away from these heavenly splendors, and, fixing your eyes on earthly objects, have impiously concluded, from the facility with which you view them, that there is nothing, even in God, too powerful for your sight. Another of the purposes of God was to make trial of your obedience. Had he commanded nothing difficult, where would have been the merit of your submission? Therefore he called for a surrender of

your mind; he commanded you to yield up to him what you value above all things, your liberty and independence of thinking. But you resist him; you spurn this restraint; and can you be agreeable in his divine eyes? Finally, God, in revealing incomprehensible truths, demands from you the homage due to his veracity. Man himself expects homage, not unlike this, from his fellow-mortals; and no greater affront can we offer our neighbor, than to charge him with a lie. But you, who have not faith, refuse to pay homage to the veracity of God himself, and thus give the lie, not only to infinite majesty, but to infinite and essential truth. And can you, with all your exterior display of virtue, be pleasing to God?

Thus does St. Paul speak to all who have not faith; for, such is the real import of those words: *Without faith it is impossible to please God.* And let it not be thought that those alone, in the sense of St. Paul, are without faith, who wholly reject revelation. No! He also is manifestly devoid of faith, who culpably refuses his assent to any one revealed truth, though he believe in all others. For, since the point rejected has the same divine authority as the rest, why does he not admit it? Can he reject it without undervaluing this authority? Can he reject it, without preferring his own lights before those of God? And where, then, is his faith, the very essence of which is to believe on God's authority, and not on our own? Whatever he believes, then, he believes—not by divine—but human faith: his creed is the effect, not of grace, but of whim or education; and he is in that fatal career which leads to unreserved infidelity. Wherefore, we may apply to faith, what St. James says of the commandments in general: *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, becomes guilty of all.*

But, though it be thus evident that faith is necessary to salvation, yet we must not conclude, with Luther and his deluded followers, that it is the only requisite. It is, indeed, the foundation, but there must be a superstructure, and this superstructure is charity,—the second point, to which I now request your attention.

The transgression of our first parents caused, not only a darkness in man's understanding, but a deplorable irregularity in his will. Bound by the very first law of nature to consecrate his

heart to him who had made it, and who had given it the power of loving, for no other purpose but that it might be employed on his ineffable beauty and perfections, he had, by a fatal perversity, turned away from this his sovereign, his only good, and had centred his affections on creatures. God was not only not loved, he was insulted, and every other object, however trivial, however deformed, was thought more worthy of love than he. Not even man's own happiness could engage him to love his God. He felt disappointed in every effort to satisfy his heart by any thing out of God, and yet he refused to fix it on him: the foul and poisoned streams of which he drank, only parched him with a still more raging thirst, and yet he would not approach the fountain of living waters, where alone he could quench it. This perversity of will was man's greatest crime; and it was totally impossible that he could be reconciled to God till it was removed. Yes, our Saviour might enlighten him by his heavenly doctrine, he might even die for him, till he had corrected the irregularity of his will. For, till this was done, man still remained an idolater, if not exteriorly, at least interiorly: if not by invoking false gods, at least by serving them; if not by erecting in their honor temples and altars made by human hands, at least by sacrilegiously dedicating to them the temple of his bosom, the altar of his heart, made by the living God himself, for his own divine worship. Accordingly, the reformation of the human will was the grand object of every thing which our Saviour did in favor of man. For this he descended from heaven, for this he preached, for this he died. Now the human will could be reformed, only by being brought back to God, its legitimate, its essential object; and this is the sacred office of charity, or the love of God above all things; which is, therefore, said by St. Paul to be the end of all the commandments. Faith is only a preparation for charity; faith points out the object of our love, but charity seizes it; and, as it can be of no avail to come in sight of a prize, unless we take possession of it, so faith can be of no ultimate service to us, if we have not charity.

And now, my brethren, let me ask you, is your faith accompanied by charity? You believe that God is your sovereign good, and you expect to be one day completely and eternally happy in the enjoyment of him. You know, not only by faith,

but also by your own experience, that you cannot possibly repose except in God. The sweet pleasure which you enjoy whenever you act virtuously, and the pangs which you feel as often as you indulge in vice, are convincing proofs of this grand truth. If ever you walked fervently in the way of God's commandments, and consequently excluded every love that was not subordinate to your love of him, you well remember the happiness which you then enjoyed, and how sensibly you felt that your hearts were obeying their best inclinations, and tending towards the object for which they were created. On the contrary, if you have ever been in the habit of any mortal sin, and thus preferred the creature to the Creator, you know what was the wretchedness of your souls. You know that the pleasures which you pursued were mere phantoms, which constantly mocked your embraces, and that the efforts which you made in grasping them only served to redouble your misery. And yet, with all this knowledge from faith and experience, what, I again ask, is the state of your hearts at this present moment? Are they fixed on God by a predominating love? Of some in my audience, I confide, an affirmative answer is true, though themselves would tremble to give it. With such I sincerely congratulate; their hearts are perpetually tasting their true and only food, and from the exquisite delight resulting from this imperfect enjoyment they can easily conjecture what will be their happiness when they shall be allowed to satiate themselves eternally with it. But are there none here present whose faith is dead for want of charity? Were we summoned this moment before the Searcher of the reins and the heart, would every one of us be found loving him above all things? An examination of our habitual thoughts, words, and actions, will soon enable us to answer this question.

In the first place, the heart never fails to bear the mind along with it towards the object beloved: so that, from what principally occupies the mind, we may always conclude what are the predominant inclinations of the heart. For the truth of this observation, I need only appeal to your own experience; for you well know what a grasp those things take on your thoughts which have strongly seized your affections. Wherefore, he who loves God above all things will certainly think of him more than

of any thing else. Like the Israelites on the banks of the rivers of Babylon, he will not suffer the objects which surround him in this exile of the world to distract him from the recollection of the God of Sion, but with the prophet will exclaim: *Let my right hand be forgotten; let my tongue cleave to my palate, if I do not remember thee; if I do not propose Jerusalem in the beginning of my joy.* Yes, all nature will remind him of his God. The heavens will relate to him his glory, and the firmament the works of his hands. The earth will appear to teem with his bounty; while the ever-varying events, whether agreeable or disagreeable, prosperous or adverse, which come to his knowledge, will continually admonish him that he whom he loves is the grand agent in these moral phenomena, no less than in those of nature, and equally displays in them his infinite perfections. But, if great numbers, even of those who have the appearance of virtue, were examined by this criterion, would it not be found absurd to affirm that the love of God is the ruling passion of their souls? Perhaps they turn their minds to him during a short interval in the morning and evening: perhaps they say a few short prayers; but in what manner do they perform this exercise? Do they feel as if relieved from a constraint in which they had been held by their other occupations, and, like the mariner's needle when turned from the pole, do they rush back to the point to which they habitually tend, and sweetly repose on being allowed to settle there? Ah, no! It is then only they are in a state of violence; the uneasiness, the disgust which they feel, and the relief which they experience, when their task of thinking on God is over, are evident proofs that he is very far from being their principal attraction. And how often do they think on him during the day? Do not the merest trifles interest them more than he, and seem infinitely more worthy of their solicitude? Where, then, is their charity, their predominating love of God?

In the second place, we delight in speaking of that of which we are most fond; or, as our blessed Saviour words it, *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* Here, again, it is manifest that charity reigns in the hearts of but very few even of true believers. God is not only not the favorite topic among Catholics in general,—he is entirely banished from their

conversation. To mention him, even indirectly, so far from exciting delight, causes an immediate gloom; it is an intrusion on sociability, an intolerable breach of manners. But what throws into conversation its principal zest? What subject is most relished? The conscience of many will reply:—the imperfections and defects of their neighbors. At the mention of these, the languid circle instantly revives, every eye sparkles, every tongue is eloquent. Do they love God, then? How can they be said to love Him, and thus triumph in the misfortunes of those whom he loves, and whom he commands them to love for his sake? No, the habit of detraction is in itself a demonstration that the faith of those who practise it is lifeless. *We know*, says St. John, *that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death.*

In the third place, a prevailing love is always manifested by corresponding actions. The miser dedicates his whole life to the acquisition of his favorite gold: the man whose heart is fixed on worldly distinctions is ever found in the career which he thinks will conduct to them: and no efforts seem excessive to the voluptuary, in the pursuit of his base and degrading pleasures. In like manner, he, in whom the love of God predominates, will infallibly put in practice every means by which he may obtain his treasure. Hence, as the observance of the commandments of God and of his Church is the only path that leads to God, he will throw himself into it with alacrity, and, fixing his eye on its glorious termination, will consider as nothing the thorns upon which he may have to tread, and the obstacles which he has to encounter. Hence, also, he will be constantly on his guard against the enemies, who may attempt either to seduce him from the sacred path, or to force him to leave it by open violence. With the former of these enemies he will not enter into parley, but contemptuously pass them by: with the latter he will courageously engage, and, however numerous they may be, however powerful, the divine principle which animates his breast will enable him to lay them at his feet. And you, my brethren, how stand you affected to the commandments of God and of his Church? Are you exact in their observance? If not, you at once unequivocally show that God is not the

favorite object of your affections; that there is something in your opinion more lovely than he, and something more closely connected with your happiness. Thus he is not your God, and, with all your pretensions to Christianity, you are idolaters; since you serve the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for evermore.

But there are great numbers, who, though they imagine themselves guiltless of any grievous breach of the commandments, yet evidently show, by their conduct, that the love of God is far from being the ruling passion of their souls. What appears to be mortal they indeed avoid; but as for venial sin, they drink it down like water. Lies, in what they call trivial matters, sallies of anger and impatience, an excessive attachment to their own will, an extreme jealousy on the point of honor, an eagerness for applause, a censoriousness in regard of their neighbors, in a word, a perpetual effort at self-gratification, and an abhorrence of whatever mortifies and contradicts them, are defects of which they make little or no account; and thus, though they are in reality their own idols, they flatter themselves that they love God with a sovereign love. How do these lovers of God spend their time? Do not the world and their amusements engross nearly the whole of it? Even when business and amusement cease, and their time lies heavily on their hands, not even then can they resolve to turn their attention to God. No! they who pretend to love him above all things, will dedicate their hours of leisure to any thing rather than to him, and often prefer absolute idleness to any occupation which has him for its object.

Thus, the greater part of Christians, if they impartially examine the general tenor of their thoughts, words, and actions, will find that their faith is practically of no avail to them, because not accompanied by charity. They pay to God the homage of their understanding, but the homage of their hearts they offer to idols. They see the path which leads to their sovereign good, but, by a strange infatuation, are hurrying down the opposite way, and will, if they persist, soon arrive at that dreadful gulf, where God, to punish them for their contempt of his beauty, shall hide his face for ever from them, and where their natural tendency to his embraces shall continue, yes, shall

be increased almost to an infinite degree, for no other purpose than to be the greatest of their everlasting torments. Let me conclude, then, by addressing you in the words spoken by God to the Jews, through the prophet Isaias. *Return, prevaricators, to your heart. Remember, I am God; and there is no other God; nor is there like to me. Hear, ye hard of heart, who are far from justice.* Yes! my brethren, the heart of man may go in quest of other gods, but will never find any God but him who made it. Though it roam through the whole creation, and successively inquire of every creature, all things will answer it: We are not thy God. Riches, honors, and pleasures may, at a distance, wear the appearance of divinity, but, when approached, will answer in the same language, We are not thy God, we cannot make thee happy. Return, then, prevaricators, to your heart: act in obedience to your own feelings. Your longing for happiness is, in reality, a longing for God; for he alone is the source and centre of happiness; and, by creating you with this invincible propensity, he clearly intimates, that, if you will hear his words, he will, in his infinite goodness, make you completely and eternally happy.

Sermon XLIX.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

Whom when he saw, he said, Go, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were made clean.—Luke xvii. 14.

The leprosy has ever been considered the type of sin: for this reason, the Mosaic law required that a person defiled with this disease should be separated from society, till his cure was certified by the priests, to whom the inspection of lepers was intrusted. This legal appointment was most salutary, both to the sufferer and to the commonwealth: the former was obliged to seek an efficient remedy; while the latter was secured from infection. Our Lord has been pleased, in the New Law, to institute the same mode of discipline and cure for the more loathsome and more fatal leprosy of sin. The Christian leper is to separate himself from the communion, till he is declared by the priest to be cleansed: he is to go and show himself to the priests, he is to make known the diseased state of his soul, and is to sacrifice his criminal affections, and submit to the inspection and treatment of the priest, who is divinely appointed the physician of the soul. Is not the sinner to apply, then, immediately to God for his cure? Most certainly he is, for God alone can effect it. Whence, then, the necessity of applying to the priest? Because God has appointed the priest to judge in his stead, and to pass sentence in his name. To the priests, God has said, *Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven:* and again, *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain, they are re-*

tained. This divine commission, while it constitutes the priests the depositaries of God's power, establishes a tribunal on earth, the decisions of which are ratified in heaven.

Now, how can this divine commission be exercised, if confession be not necessary? Some sinners are to be forgiven, and others are not: how shall the priest know whether to absolve or to retain? God reserves to himself the intuitive knowledge of the human heart; hence, if the priest is to *judge*, the penitent must bear witness. Now, unless the priest *judge*, he cannot either forgive or retain. But he is appointed to forgive and to retain; hence, he must judge who are worthy and who are unworthy, and, for this, the confession of the sinner is necessary. Was it to no purpose that our Lord gave to the head of the Church the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Why does the priest hold the keys, if the sinner can open for himself? Why should the priest have power to loose, if the captive can loose himself? But, how shall the priest bind, if the sinner can immediately unbind? The Church, then, has power to bind and to loose, in virtue whereof the priest is a spiritual judge: how shall he judge, without hearing the cause? How shall he hear the cause, but from the accusation of the penitent? The priest is the physician of the soul: how shall he prescribe remedies without knowing the malady? The Scripture says of the priest, that the people shall seek the law at his mouth. Hence, he is a legal adviser: but how shall he give counsel, without knowledge of the case? Are you, then, conscious of crime? apply to that tribunal, where whatever is loosed upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven. Is your soul defiled with a spiritual leprosy? *go, show yourselves to the priests;* for they are appointed to inspect and prescribe. Are you fearful, lest God should enter into judgment with you? apply for counsel. In vain do you expect the cure of your maladies, if you neglect the means appointed for your cure. God is ever willing to heal your leprosy, if you are disposed to apply, as he directs; his command is, *Go, show yourselves to the priest.* In the presence of God and his minister, humbly lay open your heart; the priest, understanding your disorder, will prescribe remedies; if you be in a condition to receive the peace of God, he will impart it: and,

if you be not yet sufficiently disposed, he will appoint you the means of disposing yourselves for that great blessing.

Thus we perceive, that, by the sacred institution of confession, God has precluded the evils of self-delusion, by appointing an impartial judge; he has furnished us with a physician in our distempers, and an adviser in our difficulties; an instructor in our ignorances,—in fine, a director in our whole conduct. Let us, then, bless the bounty of God for this salutary institution. Let us not blush to show our wounds; but let us rejoice to have them cured. To be wasted by sickness rather than take medicine is consummate folly, and to linger unto death rather than confide our disorder to a physician, is absolute madness and self-destruction. What! shall a sinner dare to commit, in the sight of the angels of God, what he dares not confess to his minister? Will he prefer to be exposed to the eternal reproaches of the universe,—will he dare the scorn of angels, the reproach of saints, the insults of devils, the vengeance of God, rather than confide his secret to one man, who will pity the failings of a brother, who will endeavor to comfort him; who will join the angels of God in rejoicing over one sinner doing penance, more than over ninety-nine just? Let us think aright: to commit sin is indeed disgraceful; to acknowledge it is highly honorable.

On the other hand, does the sinner effectually conceal his guilt by abstaining from confession? No! God and his angels witness his crime; and, what is more, not only the priest but the people witness the same. For they see that he neglects the sacraments; and what do they conclude, but that he has crimes which he dares not confess, or vices which he will not relinquish? Thus, the Catholic, who acknowledges the obligation of confession, yet neglects its fulfilment, so far from screening himself, publishes his state to the whole congregation. A primitive saint advises us to confess our sins to one man, rather than have to blush for them, at the day of judgment, before the whole world. And another father observes "that they who refuse to confess are inwardly harassed and almost suffocated by the phlegm of sin; but no sooner have they confessed, than they are freed from a grievous burden. Every one, who has ever made a good confession, can bear witness to the justice of these observations. The inquietude of remorse is busy by day and by

night; in vain the sinner plunges deeper into the whirlpool of dissipation, to silence its unwelcome admonitions; sobriety returns, and remorse sharpens its fangs. Thought may be drowned for a while, but it will return and upbraid; and the more lethargic the torpor of dissipation, the more cruel the reproaches of remorse. Yes, remorse ever pursues the obstinate sinner; but quits the sincere penitent. No sooner does the sinner disburden his mind by confession, than he feels himself restored to happiness. Did you ever neglect confession, without feeling uneasy? And did you ever make an humble acknowledgment of your sins, without feeling more tranquil, more happy? In other words, which gives greater satisfaction—the having confessed, or the having neglected to confess? I am persuaded that there is no more solid, more lasting satisfaction, than the assurance of having made a good confession. You are aware of this; whence, then, this general neglect of the sacraments? Will you rather suffer uneasiness than feel pleasure? Have you no time? You have time for this world, but none for heaven. You have time for the meat which perisheth, but none for that which endureth unto life everlasting. Will you toil and slave here, and be miserable hereafter? Are not the pains of this world sufficient? will you add the punishments of the next?

Oh! it is a melancholy circumstance, that we, who have every facility of approaching the sacraments, are not so exact in our duties as our fathers were, even when persecution threatened them with death for entering a chapel. Is heaven less valuable because God has rendered the access more easy? 'Tis the misfortune of men to set less value upon what may be easily procured; but let us be more reasonable, let us estimate things by their intrinsic worth. Do not neglect the means of salvation because they are plentifully afforded. On the contrary, let your approaches to the sacraments be frequent, in full proportion to the facilities which you enjoy. But, whenever you prepare to present yourselves at the holy tribunal of penance, recollect, that, although pardon is granted to humble confession, absolution is not ratified without full acknowledgment; remedies are not suitable where the disorder is but half known; counsel is not appropriate where circumstances are concealed. Your con-

fession must be entire; and, if entire confession is requisite, full examination is imperative. Study, then, to know yourselves, by assiduous research into the labyrinth of your hearts. Call distinctly to mind, with their number and circumstances, all your transgressions against the divine law, or the commands of God's Church, either in thought, word, or deed—every omission of duty to God or to your neighbor; the habits you may have contracted, and the occasions to which you have wilfully exposed yourselves. You must, like King Ezechias, "recall your years in the bitterness of your souls," to acquire self-knowledge, and lay open the recesses of your heart, that the physician may extract the poison which would canker your vitals. Whence so many invalid and sacrilegious confessions, but from imperfect acknowledgment, for want of complete examination? You declare what is common to human nature, but you descend not to the details of your particular obligations. Parents confess their anger and impatience, but forget their neglect of instructing their offspring. Masters acknowledge their irritation at the neglect of domestics, but overlook their own negligence in seeing that their domestics serve God. The merchant will declare the distractions of his prayer through worldly solicitude, but forgets his *overreaching*, which he styles making a *bargain*, his *deceit*, which he calls *management*. The workman will accuse himself of listening to idle conversation, but forgets the loss of time, and injury thereby occasioned to his employer. Now all these sins, and a thousand others, are not perceived, for want of diligent examination; hence, they are neither confessed, nor repented of, nor amended. Nor let any one flatter himself that these sins, because not *thought of*, must not be *accounted for*. Every man is bound to know the duties of his state; and the neglect thereof will be equivalent to the neglect of known duties. Unhappy blindness, not to be pitied as a misfortune, but to be punished as a crime!

The ruling passion also blinds the soul; this must be discovered before we can acquire self-knowledge. You must inquire whether pride inflames, or covetousness enslaves you; whether lust burns, or anger maddens; whether gluttony brutalizes, or envy gnaws, or sloth enervates the soul. This inquiry is all-important: for the predominant vice is the mainspring of evil pro-

pensity. If we stop the mainspring, pernicious action is impeded. To discover our prevailing inclination becomes indispensable, and the discovery is thus made. You must reflect what thoughts most constantly occupy your mind. Do you constantly seek to be known, honored, or courted? do you resent the least slight? do you swell at the least indignity?—*Your* vice is pride. Are your thoughts engaged from dawn till eve on lucre? are you ever eager for the least gain, mortified at the least loss, and heedless of your distressed neighbor?—*Your* vice is covetousness. Is your heart beset with the memory of an object which inflames? is it your *pleasure* to speak thereof? your *desire* to see that object? do you allow a loose rein to your senses, or indulge in obscene discourse? have you ceased to blush at certain liberties contrary to modesty?—*Your* passion is lust. Are you constantly irritated, frequently cursing, ever resenting, ever fretful, ever impatient?—*Your* passion is anger. Are you over-nice in diet, impatient of abstinence, never contented but by repletion?—*Your* vice is gluttony. Does the prosperity of neighbors give uneasiness?—*Your* vice is envy. Does duty fatigue, does piety seem tedious?—*Your* passion is sloth.

But, alas! how many will find that they labor under a complication of various disorders! Their examination must be the more diligent, that they may obtain self-knowledge, and thus make the first advance towards amendment.

But what rule must we establish for this examination? That which God will employ—the thorough searching of the heart—the calling to account for every idle word. *There is nothing hidden which shall not be brought to light.* The woman of the gospel, having lost a groat, lighted a taper, removed every thing, swept every recess of the house, and rested not till the loss was recovered. And if you have lost the treasure of divine grace, and cannot recover it, but by examination and confession, can you think it too much to search every recess of your heart? True it is, that you will never have a knowledge of yourselves absolutely perfect; but that degree of perfection is required of which you are capable. This general rule is certain, that the more vices we are subject to, and the less frequently we confess, the longer should be our examination. How shall the habitual sinner, who finds a difficulty in recalling the crimes of one day,

examine the catalogue of months in a few minutes? Yet these are the sinners who employ the least time in examination! Hence their confession is made in a few vague words, that mean almost nothing. They mention neither the number nor the kind of their sins; but think it enough to mention, in general terms, that they are sinners.

Is it thus that they are wont to conduct their temporal business? Oh, no! Have they an important lawsuit? Whole days are not deemed sufficient to examine the most minute circumstances that may possibly conduce to a favorable result. Have they to render an account? How many revisions are made, with what exactness is every item scrutinized! Behold, here, the rule of your preparation for the most momentous cause that man can have. Only imitate the diligence of the worldling, and you have done enough. But, unhappily, *the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*

He, then, who would fully know himself, in order to amend, must, in the earnestness of his soul, implore the light of heaven, without which human knowledge is but darkness. Let him consider himself as prefigured by the blind man in the gospel. Let him exclaim, in humble confidence, *Jesus, son of David, take pity on me!* And, though the passing crowd of habitual thoughts should strive to divert his attention, though the demon of his prevailing sin should rebuke him, that he should hold his peace, let him cry the more earnestly, *Jesus, son of David, have pity on me!* Let him persevere till the Lord, in mercy, approaching to him in the midst of the crowd, silence the clamor of unbridled thoughts, and, in the calm that ensues, seem to say, *What wilt thou that I do unto thee?* Then let him, with reverential importunity, exclaim, *Lord, that I may see;* that I may see the depth of my wounds; that I may see and be sensible of my sad condition; that thereby I may be moved to seek an adequate remedy. And when the condescension of God shall say, *Receive thy sight,* let the sinner instantly commence his co-operation with the divine grace, by sounding the depth of his wounds. Above all, let him examine his predominate passion. Then let sufficient time be employed for the full knowledge of the extent and variety of his spiritual wounds. After which, and not before, *Go show thyself to the priest.* Attend

to his advice, follow his directions; but be not too hastily desirous of his absolution. That cannot avail thee till thou not only seest, but feelest and lamentest thy miseries: that cannot avail thee till thy spirit is humbled and thy heart contrite.

In the divine parable of the Prodigal Son, we behold the portrait of a sincere penitent. The sinner becomes disgusted with the wandering which was heretofore his delight, disgusted with the pleasures which he before craved; weary of the slavery which he formerly courted. Thus experiencing the emptiness of sublunary gratification, and visited by divine motions of grace, he commences his conversion by a resolution of retracing his steps. *I will arise.* Yes: I will arise from that prostration of intellect in which a mind, almost capable of angelic soarings, has been debased to a level with the brute instinct. I will arise from the degradation of moral bondage, and, against the combined forces of diabolical tyranny and traitorous self, I will assert the liberty of a child of God: *And go home;* for too long have I wandered in a foreign land, where I have consumed my substance without satiating my gnawing appetite, without quenching that dropsied thirst which drinks but to thirst the more. *I will go to my father.* Yes: wretch that I am, he is still a father to me; he yearned at my departure; he regrets my absence; he will hail my return. But my father's affection is my bitterest regret: had I not slighted his counsel, I could forgive myself; had I not abused his forbearance, I could endure myself; had I not despised his love, I could meet him with joy. But yet I will go to my father, though the effort be a torment. I deserve my self-reproach, and I will endure it; I deserve the pangs which my father's forgiveness will excite in my self-condemning breast, and I will inflict them. Such, Christians, are the first feelings of a generous heart, conscious of having insulted the best of parents.

St. Gregory says, "Penance bewails what is committed, and commits not what it bewails." Without this disposition of sorrow for the past and of amendment for the future, God never *did*, and never *will*, pardon. Hence the prophet exclaims: *Cast away from you all your iniquities, and make unto you a new heart.* Without this unfeigned sorrow of heart, no outward semblance of grief is better than hypocrisy. Hence the

inspired Joel exclaims: *Rend your hearts, and not your garments.* Hence, too, the Lord declares: *Be converted to me with your whole heart, and I will return to you.* Behold the example of the penitent David; in the spirit of contrition he cries out: *All my bones have been troubled.* And again: *Every night I will wash my bed, I will water my couch with my tears.* Without this true contrition, no sacrifice can appease the wrath of God; this is the sin-offering of the penitent. *A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit, a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* Hence let us conclude that the tears of the heart are the bath of the soul, without which the leprosy of sin is not cleansed. Imagine not that the sacramental penance supersedes the necessity of contrition. Oh, no! The Church of God authorizes no such delusion. For it teaches that unfeigned sorrow of heart is an indispensable disposition for the reception of the sacrament; and the Council of Trent declares, in the language of our Lord: *Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish.*

In vain, then, do you approach the tribunal of confession; in vain do you candidly acknowledge your sins, in vain does the minister of God pronounce absolution, unless you are disposed by heartfelt sorrow. Your confessions are null, your sentence is void; you have deceived your director; you have profaned what is holy; you leave the confessional more guilty than you entered it. And if you presume to approach the holy table, you add sacrilege to sacrilege; *you eat and drink judgment to yourself, not discerning the body of the Lord.*

Would I, then, deter you from the sacraments? God forbid! But I would urge the necessity of amendment. When the stomach is diseased, food may be poison; when the soul is diseased, the bread of life is death. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself.* But again, to *refrain* from eating is as surely death as taking poison. For, *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall have no life in you.* Eat, that you may *live;* but eat not *unworthily*, lest you *die.*

Be not, then, deterred from penance, though it be a laborious baptism. If human weakness shrink at the difficulty, remember the signal mercies of God. The co-eternal Son of God brooked

infant weakness, to redeem his sinful creatures. He came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance: he leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, to seek the one sheep that was lost. If, like the prodigal, you say to your heart, "I will go home to my father's house," he will behold you, when you are yet afar off; he will run to meet you; he will put the ring of integrity on your finger; he will put shoes upon your feet, to protect you from the thorny way; he will clothe you with the festive garment of charity; he will fall on your neck, and give you the kiss of peace. He will order the fatted calf to be killed, and rejoicing to be made, saying: *My son was dead and is come to life, he was lost and is found.*

Sermon XLVII.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

OBLATION OF OURSELVES TO GOD.

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, sanctify unto me every first-born that openeth the womb among the children of Israel, for they are all mine.—EXODUS xiii. 1, 2.

THE law of Moses was, in its precepts, an expression of the law of nature; in its rites and ceremonies, a figure of the law of grace. That all creatures belong to God, from the first moment of their existence, is a truth, which nature itself, even before the written law, had dictated to man; but, when the children of Israel are commanded to give testimony to this truth, first, by presenting their first-born to the Lord; secondly, by presenting them within forty days after the birth; and, thirdly, by sanctifying, that is, by totally and irrevocably surrendering them to God; a most beautiful and lively image is presented of the manner in which the children of the new law are bound to make a dedication of themselves to their Creator. It was in the double capacity of accomplisher of the old law and of founder of the new, that our Divine Redeemer himself complied with this institution of the Mosaic Dispensation, on the day when he was presented in the temple by his Virgin Mother. Thus he at once put an honorable end to the ceremonial observances, and ratified that which these observances were intended to prefigure and inculcate. It cannot but be useful to consider what were the lessons which our divine Model designed for our instruction, in that solemn act of his commencing life; and this I shall endeavor to do, by tracing the characteristics of a perfect dedication of the heart to God, as

prefigured in that ordinance of the Mosaic law which he then fulfilled.

The first remarkable circumstance in the precept contained in my text is, that the Israelites were not permitted to choose which of their children should be allotted to the Lord. They are peremptorily commanded to surrender to God their first-born,—that, among their offspring, which is usually the object of the greatest affection. *Sanctify unto me the first-born of the children of Israel.* To honor God with an esteem of preference, to immolate and surrender to him the first and most cherished affections of the heart, is the obligation to which every Christian is bound by the law of grace. This precept, of giving to God a homage of preference, is general: it admits no excuse or interpretation. He, who has created your hearts, absolutely claims them as his own. *For they are all mine.* If, in the oblation which you tender to him of your affections, you attempt to make a reserve; if you give him not the preference above all other things; if your own feelings and humor be the rule and measure of your service to him; the offering, which you present, is not such as he demands, and consequently will not be received. Now, let us examine the conduct of the majority of Christians; I say not, examine their language and professions: true it is, that God is the Being, to whom they profess to give the first homage of their hearts; but, in the detail of their lives, do they not, on a thousand occasions, prefer the creature before him? Let each one interrogate his own conscience. Have I more, have I even the same, ardor and earnestness to please God, as to please and gratify myself? Does an outrage, committed against his divine Majesty, arouse and trouble me as much as one of which I myself am the object? Am I as much afflicted at a sin by which God is offended, as at a calamity or humiliation that has happened to myself? Am I ready to sacrifice my wealth and my pleasures, my ease and my comforts, to promote his interests and glory? Alas! the slightest reflection on our own conduct will be sufficient to show how little account we make of the interests of God, when put in competition with our own pleasure. And yet we continue audaciously to tell God that we love him above all things, vainly pretending to renew, in our daily prayers, that total dedication and oblation

of heart, which we have never once effectually made. As long as his service interferes not with some favorite passion or inclination, we fondly flatter ourselves into a belief that he receives the first homage of our heart; but, no sooner does he enjoin us something repugnant to our ideas and our wishes, than we throw off the mask, disregard his will, and look round for excuses to colour our perfidy. He, on the contrary, who has really and practically dedicated himself to the love of his Creator, undervalues, rejects, abhors all things that offer to shake his allegiance. Let the world display the choicest of its charms; let flesh and blood shrink ever so much from the sacrifice demanded; let self-love make use of all its artifices and pretexts of greater good; he listens to no suggestions, regards no feelings, but, like the holy patriarch, is ready to immolate with his own hands the fondest object of his hopes and affections.

The second circumstance observable in the precept relating to the presentation of the first-born is, that this presentation was to be made within the fortieth day after the birth. God, who demands our heart, demands it without delay. All our moments belong to him. He has watched over us from the commencement of our existence: he it was who created the day of our birth, who creates and measures the moments of our lives; who, gradually dissipating the cloud in which our infant reason was at first enveloped, infused into us light, consciousness, and reflection. Every moment, then, in which, from this early period, we have neglected to give to God the homage of that reason, with which we have been endowed, is time, not only unprofitably passed, but treasonably and impiously consumed. Sinners, look back upon those years of your lives which have already disappeared. What an accumulation of guilt is not presented by the retrospect! During so many years, in which God has granted you life, what period have you employed in serving him? Were the first desires of your earliest youth directed towards him? Were the first beatings of your heart those of love and gratitude for his goodness? Were your succeeding years dedicated to his service? What have you hitherto done for God, and where is the sacrifice which he has so long demanded at your hands? Every period of the life of man belongs to God, and yet, alas! every period is but too often spent in dishonoring him. To the

triflings of infancy succeed the follies of youth. Warm, impetuous, and inconstant, the youth seizes the present moment as the season of lawful enjoyment, and leaves to a more sedate age the cares of eternity. Business then steps in to seize the fairest portion of human life. The acquisition of wealth, the bustle of society, the toils of ambition, usually occupy the attention of the man. Life, in the mean time, passes away with rapidity, while the only affair for which we were created is forgotten. O man! is it to be thus contemned, that God has gifted thee with life, and every day loads thee with new benefits?

The third circumstance in the precept mentioned in the text was, that the first-born should be sanctified,—that is, should be dedicated and immolated to the Lord. The first-born of animals were actually slain; if men were not sacrificed, they were redeemed by animals immolated in their place. He, who would effectually become the portion of God, a victim worthy of his acceptance, must also die. He must die to the world; must die to its honors, to its riches, and to its pleasures. He must go still farther, and if he would consummate the sacrifice, he must do that which St. Gregory declares to be yet more difficult than all this,—he must die to himself.

Yes, Christians! this spiritual immolation, this dying to ourselves, is essentially necessary to a perfect sacrifice. But how are we to die to ourselves? Is it merely by refraining from those excesses which are repugnant to the first principles of morality, as well as of religion? Is it only by a forced and reluctant observance of the commandments? Is it by vain endeavors to reconcile the service of God with the service of mammon? Is it by refusing ourselves only those indulgences which we know will be followed by eternal damnation, while we give to our senses and passions unrestrained liberty, within the broad limits which we have been pleased to assign them? Ah! to make such a sacrifice were not in reality to slay the victim, but to substitute in its place an insignificant animal, which, under the law of types and figures, might perhaps be received; but which, in a worship of reality and truth, cannot fail of being rejected. To die to ourselves in effect, we must, by a total and perpetual mortification of the senses and passions, subdue our domestic enemy; we must, as St. Paul says, *crucify the flesh with its vices*

and concupiscences; we must, by an habitual self-denial, close every avenue by which sin may gain entrance to our heart; in fine, we must, by an utter subjection, or rather an annihilation of our own will and inclinations, be no longer ourselves, but become in all things conformable to God. This spiritual death must be undergone by every true victim of divine love. For, as true friendship consists in a similarity of sentiments and desires, it were vain to aspire to be the friends of God as long as we are not dead to those desires which are opposed to his. If this spiritual death accompany our sacrifice, justly may we expect that God will look down upon our holocaust, and consume it with that fire which our divine Redeemer came to cast upon the earth.

The next and most important characteristic of a true oblation is, that it be made in and through Jesus Christ. *If any one,* says St. Peter, *speak, let him speak as the words of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the power which God administereth; that in all things God may be honored, through Jesus Christ, to whom is glory and empire for ever. Amen.* From him, whom they prefigured, did the ancient sacrifices derive all their efficacy, and through him alone can the Christian oblation be acceptable.

God is great; man is weak and little: God is holy; man is full of iniquity: hence, to elevate his baseness and his nothing, and to render the homage which he offers to God worthy of his greatness, he must have recourse to the dignity of Jesus Christ. In fact, only an infinite honor is adapted to an infinite being: nothing limited is commensurate with a being without limits. Now where, in the whole range of created nature, shall we find a being that is capable of offering a homage such as this? Shall it be in the stars of the firmament? but these glorious luminaries, with all their brightness, are but faint glimmerings that totally disappear at the presence of the sun of glory. Shall it be, in this earth, decked out with so much beauty? but the whole earth is an insignificant atom, in his eyes. Shall it be among angels, principalities, powers? but the pillars of heaven, says the prophet, bow down under the weight of his majesty; the foundations of the universe are shaken at his presence. Angels and men, principalities and powers, all creatures are

before him a despicable nothing; and homage, great as it may appear to us, can have nothing compared to his grandeur. *Behold, the nations are as a drop of water, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance. And Libanus shall not be enough to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity.*

Yes, my brethren, it is only by means of the high-priest, who has penetrated the heavens, that we can have access to the throne of grace; he alone is our peace, our redemption, our justification; with him, then, must we offer ourselves: or rather him alone ought we to offer as the only victim capable of atoning for sin, since it is only the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, as being of infinite value, that can answer the demands of infinite justice. *What shall I offer to the Lord that is worthy?* cries out the prophet Micheas, *wherewith shall I kneel before the high God? may the Lord be appeased with thousands of rams? Shall I give my first-born for my wickedness?*

It is not sufficient, my brethren, to avenge sin on ourselves by austerities; it is necessary that our penance be united to that of Jesus Christ, whose virtue, says the Council of Trent, must necessarily go before, accompany, and follow our good works, inasmuch as the best of moral actions, without the virtue of Christ, can neither be agreeable to God nor meritorious of eternal life. The pains of the reprobate, though far more violent than those of the most austere penitents, will never be able to expiate any one of their crimes. And whence is this? It is because they are not united to those of our divine Redeemer. How utterly inefficacious, then, must our weak exertions be, if we neglect to acquire merit for them by an intimate union with the abundant satisfaction of this Man-God.

Let us, then, unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, let us glorify the Father in his divine Son; and let this union of the members with their head, and of their head with God, commence, even in this life, the admirable concert of which the apostle speaks, in which God shall be all in Christ, and Christ in us, and we in God.

This glorious union will raise the baseness of our nothing; will cover our sins; will give merit and dignity to our good

works. Even our desires will hence derive an efficacy altogether divine. Yes, the bare desire of satisfying through Jesus Christ appropriates to us the merits of his blood; his sacrifice becoming in some measure our own. And what a distinguished favor is this, my brethren! And can we ever sufficiently bless God for having given us so powerful a mediator? Yet, where are those, who, in this particular, pay him the tribute of thanksgiving? The gifts of temporal prosperity, of health, of worldly comforts, excite our gratitude; but, as for Christ, this gift, so excellent, this source of all other gifts, how few, alas, make for it a corresponding return! From the moment that holy Simeon saw the promise accomplished which the Holy Ghost had made him,—that before his death he should see the anointed of the Lord,—he burst forth into canticles of benediction. His aged limbs were invigorated, he received with ecstasy the sacred infant; he pressed him in his arms, and, transported with joy and gratitude, cried out: *Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace; because my eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

O God, may the same sentiments of gratitude animate our hearts! All is thine. It is just that all should conspire to thy glory. We consecrate ourselves entirely to thee. But what are we, feeble creatures, to honor thy infinite Majesty? Great God, receive for our homage this adorable Son, who this day presents himself for us on thy altar. This precious gift we boldly offer thee; in him we adore thee, by him we consecrate to thee every thought of our mind, every motion of our heart, every action of our life. May he be, of all, the principle, the rule, the end, and the recompense!

Sermon XLVIII.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE GENERAL IGNORANCE OF GOD.

You say that he is your God, and you have not known him.—John viii. 54, 55.

It may seem unduly harsh, my brethren, to apply to a Christian audience the severe reproach contained in these words of our divine Redeemer to the blind and unbelieving Jews. This unhappy nation claimed him as peculiarly their God, prided themselves on their superiority over the idolatrous Gentiles, and styled themselves his chosen people; yet, when, in the fulness of time, he appeared among them, their gross and carnal minds discerned him not; they rejected him, and treated him as an impostor. Thus they drew upon themselves the reproach recorded in this day's gospel; a reproach which still adheres to their infatuated posterity.

To upbraid you with ignorance of God in this sense, my brethren, can evidently be no part of my design: but there is another kind of ignorance of God, less blind and desperate, it is true, but sufficiently unworthy in itself and lamentable in its consequences, to employ the zeal of the Christian preacher. For there is a knowledge of God, which is little better than ignorance. There is a knowledge of God, that stops at the bare conviction of his existence, and, satisfied that he is, neither cares nor inquires who and what he is. And allow me to say, such is the knowledge of the greater part of Christians. They are early taught the fundamental truth of his existence: they see daily proofs of it in the world around them: nay, they themselves are daily proofs of it. They are individually connected with him in a thousand ways: they sprang from his divine hand,

and to him they must soon return; he gave them their being, and to him they look for its final perfection. Yet, in the midst of these intimate and interesting connections, it is surprising how little they study him, and how little they are acquainted with him. They ransack nature, investigate the heavens, scrutinize the subtle operations of their own mind, and explore the farthest recesses of abstract thought: yet, in the midst of all their researches, overlook the first and greatest of all sciences—the knowledge of God. So that it may be truly said, that while man prides himself upon knowing every thing, he in fact knows nothing, since he is too generally ignorant of that great Being, who is at once the source and centre of all knowledge, from whom it proceeds, and to whom it must tend, or be worse than ignorance. To establish this proposition will be the aim of the ensuing discourse. The two grand departments in which God exhibits himself to man, are the world of nature and the world of grace. I say, then, first, that you have not known him in the world of nature; secondly, that you have not known him in the world of grace.

To substantiate the first part of my charge, to prove that you have not known God in the natural world, where, perhaps, you will be least disposed to suspect your ignorance of him, might seem an undertaking of considerable difficulty. But I commence with an observation which appears to me to decide the point at once, and to leave me, in this part of my discourse, nothing to do but to develope and extend it. This natural world around us, infinitely compounded and diversified as it is, is single in its object; that is to say, while infinite diversifications of matter strike our senses, and an endless variety of perceptions occur to our minds, they have all but one ultimate object, they all, in some way or other, point to one single supreme, self-existent Being. In other words, universal nature has but one voice, and that voice speaks of God. And now, my brethren, were you acquainted with this? Is this the instruction you have collected from the world around you, of which you have been so long spectators and inhabitants? Alas! I fear I may already exclaim, *You say that he is your God, and you have not known him.*

On so boundless a subject, I have not time to enter into a

regular detail; but I shall select three of the attributes of the Deity, as particularly pointed out in the world before you, and strangely overlooked by you in your intercourse with nature: his omnipotence in its creation, his omnipresence in its constant regularity, and his infinite beauty in its various embellishments.

The first question of a rational being, on his introduction to this world, would naturally be, whence it had its origin. To this the atheist is so infatuated as to reply,—from itself, having existed from eternity. But, my brethren, I have too much respect for your understandings, to spend any time in confuting an assertion as absurd as it is impious. You have long been taught, and long believed, that yourselves and the whole world about you were created by God out of nothing. But perhaps the circumstance of your long familiarity with this truth has most of all contributed to weaken its impression. You have been so long accustomed to look round upon the world, with an implicit assent to the fact of its being created out of nothing, that you are no longer sensible of the sublimity of the idea which it conveys to us of our omnipotent God. Endeavor, then, now to renew its impression. For this purpose, try, you who can mould and fashion matter at your will, who can raise it into lofty palaces and cities, who can lift it into mountains or sink it into gulfs at your pleasure,—try if you can call a single atom into existence. Frame in your mind a conception of the simplest, rudest particle of matter, and then bid it start into actual being before you. Does it come at your call? It appears not, it has no existence beyond its airy image in your mind. No! to us mortals it is given to diversify at our will the mass of already existent matter; but to add to it one single atom, to cause that to be which was not before, belongs not to us; it is the privilege of Omnipotence. From this consideration, my brethren, turn your eyes upon the world around you; view this vast earth upon which you stand, with its infinite variety of productions, its animals, its minerals, its vegetables, with yourselves, the lords and masters of the whole: from this ascend into the regions above, and observe the innumerable worlds that people them—the sun, moon, planets, and stars, extending their range into the realms of space, further than the eye or even the

imagination of man can penetrate; and then reflect that all this immense variety of being was made out of nothing; that is to say, there was a time when of all this not a single atom was in existence. All was one universal blank; and God alone existed, who is by essence. But no sooner had he pronounced his creative fiat, than all things instantly were. *He spoke and they were created.* Nay, even this does not reach the sublime reality; for the language of Scripture is accommodated to our imperfect ideas. A word, even, was not necessary to Omnipotence. He willed, and all things existed. Beyond this, human language and human conception cannot extend; and how powerfully does it proclaim to us the omnipotence of our Creator! But, my brethren, do you draw this lesson from the sight of the vast world around you? When you survey this immense mass of diversified matter, does it ever raise a thought of him who so wonderfully called it into being? Alas! I am afraid this is the last sentiment that occurs. We till the earth, plant groves, build palaces, and dispose of matter as we please; yet forget Him who made it out of nothing, and put it into our hands to use, indeed, at our convenience, but, at the same time, to point our intellectual eye to himself, the first and last of beings. *You say that he is your God, and you have not known him.*

Looking again at the world around us, we may admire its constant order and correspondence of parts. We know that the great machine has already subsisted six thousand years; yet, six thousand years have transmitted it to us, still regular and perfect in its movements. The sun rises in the east, traverses the heavens, and sinks from view in the western main; leaving us perfectly secure of its reappearance on the ensuing morn. The seasons run round in faithful succession; cold succeeds to heat, and rain to sunshine, in due time and just proportion. Seeming irregularities sometimes occur; but they are only irregularities to the limited eye of man, and a secret hand soon restores the equilibrium of nature. What, then, is the lesson which this universal order inculcates? No other than this, that *He*, who made all things, still sustains them by his presence; he fills, pervades, and penetrates all creation. When we look through the surrounding air, we contemplate it as a

vacuity, but it is in every part filled and tenanted by Omnipotence. Matter is equally pervious to him as vacuity; and these gross bodies of ours, while pervaded by their animating principle, the soul, are still more intimately penetrated by the divine essence.

Who would not think that so sublime and interesting a truth would be continually present to the mind of a reflecting being? Yet, is there any truth which more generally escapes our recollection? We look abroad into creation, admire the regularity of its movements, observe day succeed to night, and night to day; seasons following each other in never-failing order; and every part of nature moving with the nicest exactness; yet, think not of the Almighty being, whose universal presence is the soul of all this order. We live in the midst of Omnipotence, and we remember it not: *You say that he is your God, and you have not known him.*

In one part of nature, indeed, you are awake to his presence, and, in spite of yourselves, recognise him, and bend before him. When he sends forth the rapid lightning, and makes his voice heard in the thunder, when the awful glare flashes into your closest recesses, and the redoubling peals burst over your dwellings, then indeed you start for a moment from your oblivious trance, and every feeling within you bears instant testimony to the presence of Omnipotence. At other times, when he withdraws his restraining hand from the raging elements, and gives them loose to riot lawless over creation; when he sends forth the sweeping hurricane, when he opens the floodgates of heaven, or heaves the swelling ocean above its mark; when he shakes the solid ground under your feet and buries in its opening gulfs whole cities with their inhabitants; then, indeed, you confess his presence; fear awakens your slumbering recollections; you naturally call upon Omnipotence, and deprecate his chastising arm. But, even here, how transient is the impression! No sooner has the temporary tumult of nature subsided than your fear and your fervor subside with it; and, with your former security, you return to your former forgetfulness.

The third and last circumstance to which I adverted in the world of nature, was its endless variety of beauty. And cer-

tainly, if we are not struck with this universal and obvious distinction, it must either be because we are become insensible from familiarity, or, more deplorable, because the mercenary pursuits of life have blunted and deadened our finer perceptions. To an uncorrupted mind, a survey of nature is an exquisite banquet. The gorgeous splendor of the sun, and the milder lustre of the luminaries of night, the rich verdure of the earth, decked and diversified with a thousand tints, the dark azure of the watery expanse, and the vivid sapphire of the firmament, all strike the spectator as eminently beautiful. Does he seek for beauty in the minuter parts of nature? he finds it in the flowers of the field, in the simple lily of the vale. *Amen, I say to you*, says truth itself, *not even Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these.* Does he seek it graced with motion and animated with life? he finds it, in various degrees and kinds, in the animal creation, gradually ascending through the less perfect forms, till it shines out in its full perfection, in the graceful frame and godlike countenance of man. Whence and to what end, this profusion of beauties scattered over creation? Is it a mere fortuitous assemblage of particles? It descends from above, my brethren. I called it a profusion; but the language was incorrect. It is a mere drop, a scanty emanation, issuing from the immense ocean of all beauty. Assemble together every known form of excellence; let nature give up her choicest embellishments; let the creative fancy of man add to them a thousand others, compound, diversify them, and work up the picture to its highest possible perfection: all is nothing; it is weak and powerless, a mere ray, a feeble sunbeam, swallowed up and lost in the infinite beauty which is above us, veiled at present from our mortal view, but destined one day to burst upon us and irresistibly ravish us; and which has diffused a portion of itself over creation, in order to direct our eye upwards to itself. Yes, my brethren, the beauties of nature were intended for our admiration and enjoyment, but never that we should rest in them; they serve but to guide us onward to another beauty, alone capable of satisfying the warm propensities of our hearts. And did you think of this, my brethren, when you looked round upon creation? When you were struck with its charms, did you ever raise your eyes from terrestrial to celestial beauty?

Have you, for example, when some graceful form has caught your admiring eye, looked upwards to its author? Have you abstracted the pleasing appearance from the earthly mould, of which it was the temporary ornament, and referred it to your God? No, you have grossly and blindly confounded it with its concomitant dust. You, perhaps, have even mistaken the delusive phantom for your last end, and pursued it as your ultimate happiness; and, even when disappointment had convinced you of your error, you have not profited by the dear-bought experience; you have been again and again the dupe of the shallow deception; and, even till this day, perhaps, know not the meaning of the impulse which actuated you. It was given you for a celestial, you have degraded it to an earthly purpose; it was meant for your God, you have thrown it away upon creatures; its object was infinite, eternal, unchangeable beauty, you have ignobly detained it on the perishable charms of the earth. I conclude then, my brethren, and must again repeat, *You say that he is your God, and you have not known him.* You have not known him in the world of nature: I am now to show that you have been equally strangers to him in the world of grace.

Far different, my brethren, is the view which you are now going to take of your God, from that under which you have just been contemplating him. You have seen him in the wonders of nature. You have beheld him creating a world, calling into instant existence matter, that before was not, beings that had no being; you have seen him ruling this vast universe, directing in secret its complex movements, yet ever visible in its operations, sending forth the lightnings, speaking in the thunder, and making the tumult and convulsions of nature the sport of his omnipotence. Who would, after such a scene, expect to see this same Omnipotent Being a wanderer like ourselves, upon this wretched earth, clothed in our mortal flesh, and subject to its humiliating necessities? Yet such is the astonishing spectacle which I have now to present to your admiration. Yes, my brethren, the Omnipotent, he who existed from eternity, *before whom the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is no place found for them;* even He descended from his cherub-supported throne, and, in the second person of the blessed Trinity, *was made man and dwelt among us;* became a child,

wept like a child, and subjected himself to all the weaknesses of infancy! O astonishing extremes! The Omnipotent God of heaven a helpless child of the earth! Profound and incomprehensible mystery! well may the mind of man have failed to conceive it, when the brightest intelligences of heaven knew it not to be possible. Only He could have conceived it, who accomplished it.

But the wonder is not yet complete. Go to Mount Calvary; ask of nature the meaning of her disorder. The earth trembles, the rocks are split, the graves give up their dead, the sun withdraws his light, darkness thick and awful hangs upon the earth! What is this, my brethren? It is nature mourning her God. The Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, the God of angels and men, hangs there upon the tree, abused, spit upon, crucified by his own creatures! The cause of this tragedy is as extraordinary as itself. Man had perished: he had offended his Creator, and incurred eternal death; and this same great Creator becomes his atonement; nay, when with a word he might have redeemed him, will needs die for him on a cruel and ignominious cross! Who would not expect the heavens and the earth to stand still at the spectacle? Who would not expect to see angels and men uniformly intent upon it? and to find man, in particular, entirely taken up in contemplation and wonder? Yet how little is he struck with this stupendous scene! There are minds eager after sublimity, that turn away with indifference from this most sublime of all subjects. There are eyes that glow with rapture at the imitative productions of profane art, yet see nothing of expression in the image of a crucified God. Nay, we are arrived at a time when the sacred effigy is proscribed, and its relative veneration confounded with idolatry.

And you, my brethren, have you nothing to reproach yourselves with? Will you tell me that I have been describing to you nothing new? that the wonder of an incarnate and crucified God has long been familiar to your minds? If so, how comes it that it has made on you so little impression? for it is undoubtedly the greatest of all wonders. How comes it that it has been no restraint to you in the indulgence of your passions? A crucified God is an effectual answer to every temptation. How comes it that you have murmured under the afflictions of

life? Had you looked upon the crucifix, you would have found it impossible to complain. How comes it, at least, if you have known that this is your God, that you have not oftener thought of him in this most astonishing of his dispensations; that, even at the sacred season appropriated to the commemoration of his sufferings, you are thoughtless and insensible,—pursue your business, pursue your pleasures, but pass unheeded by the sacred edifices, where the tragic scene is again displayed to your commiseration? Alas! *you say that he is your God, and you have not known him.* Yes, the incomprehensible mystery of a crucified God will employ the attention of men and angels to all eternity; yet, in this thoughtless and ungrateful world it is overlooked and forgotten.

The wonders of God in the world of grace, my brethren, are not yet exhausted. Another remains equally amazing. The omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth has not only died for man, but has even made himself his food: that is to say, by the ineffable sacrament which he has instituted, no sooner has the minister of the altar pronounced over the simple elements the mystic words, than that which appeared to the senses is no longer there, but gives place to an incorporate God, who in this humble guise communicates himself, with all the plenitude of his divinity, to his unworthy creatures. Does your imagination take the alarm? does your faith stagger at the immense disparity between an Omnipotent God and the lowly appearance of bread and wine? Look back again upon the cross; consider again the condition to which he has there reduced himself, and tell me whether he, who has already descended so low, will hesitate at any thing? Yes, the cross is an irresistible argument. After having seen a God-Man dying upon it, out of love for us, we may well give up our faith to the hardest mysteries. Away, then, all doubt and hesitation, away all cold fear and unworthy diffidence. It is He, it is He himself, our Creator, our Redeemer, and our God! Unworthiness of the priest, scandalous rapidity of the performance, indecorum of the sacred ornaments, levity of bystanders, all is of no account. When the all-powerful words have been duly uttered over the legal elements, by the consecrated successor of the apostles, an incarnate God reposes upon the altar; and the circumstance of his exposing his infinite

Majesty to such rude insults, is a new motive of wonder at this divinely invented mystery.

Here again, my brethren, to this last instance of the spiritual wonders of a God, you will probably reply, that you have heard nothing but what you knew before; and that you have long assented to the sublime doctrine of a God present upon our altars. And is it possible that you have known this, and yet been no more affected by it? that you have acknowledged the presence of a God in the stupendous sacrifice, and yet assisted at it with cold indifference? Is it possible that the belief of this wonder of wonders has not power to draw you from your superficial avocations above one day in the seven, and, even on that prescribed occasion, has not been able, during a short interval, to arrest the eternal wanderings of your dissipated minds? Is it possible that you believe these altars to be the throne of a hidden God, and yet so seldom pay him your homage at their foot? that you are assiduous in your attendance on the great ones of the world, and yet habitually neglect the King of kings? above all, that you know the object of his residence to be the communication of himself to you, with all the riches of his divinity, and yet are not more ambitious of the honor? that you slight his repeated and endearing summons, perhaps confine yourselves to one single solemnity in the year, and even then prepare for him no better a reception than a wandering imagination and a cold, unfeeling heart? Ah! my brethren, *you say that he is your God, and you have not known him.*

Thus, whichever way we turn, whether we inspect the world of nature, or contemplate the world of grace; whether we consider the greatness of the Almighty in creating and beautifying the world, or his goodness and love in redeeming and sanctifying mankind, we shall find him everywhere grand, everywhere prominent; and may I not add, everywhere unknown and forgotten. Yes, it is but too true, that the first and greatest of all objects, is the last and least in the recollection of his creatures. Though he has poured himself abroad over creation, man walks the earth and discerns him not. Though every other being points expressly at him, and even brute matter seems to say, in intelligible accents, *Behold Him who made us*, man is inattentive to the universal admonition. *He has eyes and sees*

not; he has ears and hears not. And though this great God, as if to leave him without excuse, has even come down from his celestial throne, and actually resides on his terrestrial altars, a hidden God indeed, but the true God of heaven, man is still regardless and insensible. Look round upon the ways of men: all are intent upon some object; but how few upon the only one? The young are busy in trying their new existence, and, had they leisure, have not reflection for their God. The aged are providing support for a life, which is slipping away from them, and forget their Creator, even when just falling into his hands. The man of business loses sight of him in the hurry and tumult of his affairs; the man of pleasure has provided himself with another divinity. The worldling and the sinner think of God only to insult him; and the impious atheist even denies his existence.

But fear not, my brethren; this shall not last for ever. So strange a perversity must, and will be rectified: the same hand that framed and regulated the universe, will here too establish order. This earth, so perverted by its temporary tenant—man, is but preparatory to another scene. After having been long the theatre of his iniquities, it shall expiate its deep-stained pollutions in the flames of the last fire; and as to the countless myriads of mortals, of whom it shall have been the probationary residence from the first of time, it shall have transmitted them all to their final abodes; it shall have given them back to him who made them,—who made them, and who made them for himself, and to whom, for a future eternity, they shall entirely belong. No other objects shall there subsist, to dispute with God the empire over his creatures. Eternity is his own dominion, and he shall reign in it supreme and alone. The whole human race will find themselves classed under two divisions, equally belonging to the Almighty, but belonging to him in far different ways. Those, who have been his during life, who have remembered him, contemplated him, loved him, and made him their last end, shall belong to him, in eternity, as his friends and favorites; shall sit with him on his throne, and partake in his own immortal felicity. But those, who shall not have been his during life, who shall have forgotten him, slighted him, preferred other objects before him, shall belong to him, indeed,

equally with the former, but in a sense far different and truly dreadful; as his enemies, as his reprobate creatures, given up to vengeance without mercy, destined, for the injustice of their choice during life, to serve during eternity, for the exercise of that awful attribute, his justice. *These*, says the Scripture, *shall go into everlasting punishment.* Thus shall this great and general error of time be finally rectified in eternity. And, my brethren, as in one of these eternal companies each of you must be ranked, it becomes you now, in good time, to make your choice; or rather, you have already made it. In so striking an alternative you cannot hesitate, and have doubtless chosen your portion among the blessed. But, then, remember, that nothing is more common than deception here; and that thousands of those, who fancy their happiness in eternity secure, will hear themselves addressed in those appalling words: *I know you not.* And the reason is, because many in this life imagine that they know God, and say that he is their God, and in fact they do not know him. They neither recognise him in the works of nature, nor adore him in the wonders of his grace. That this misfortune may never be yours, my brethren, let him ever be your first object and your chief study. Thus will you escape the general and fatal error, and effectually secure to yourselves *that better part which shall never be taken from you.*

Sermon XLIX.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

ON THE ANGELS.

He hath given his angels charge over thee, that they may keep thee in all thy ways.—Psalm xc. v. 11.

It is one of the advantages of revelation that it extends our view into the immaterial world. The philosopher of reason, indeed, boasts loudly of his discoveries; and, would he limit his pretensions to matter and its combinations, though even here in many things he is forced to confess his ignorance, much there is which he has plausibly explained. But, whenever he attempts to carry his inquiries into the world of spirits, he finds himself instantly involved in mist and obscurity. His most profound disquisitions serve but to perplex the simplest truth; and his philosophy becomes the contradiction of common sense. The very faculty by which he reflects and reasons, on the use of which he so much prides himself, and which forms his distinctive characteristic, is far above the reach of his most diligent investigations. Yet this is within himself. If then he extend his inquiries, and attempt to investigate the other forms of immateriality, it cannot be a subject of surprise that his efforts are without success, and that the wildest and most visionary speculations should be the result. And in effect the proud spirit of man, finding itself unable to disentangle the invisible thread which connects the material with the immaterial world, boldly presumes to deny the existence of that which he in vain endeavors to unravel; and the man of letters has been seen not seldom striving to divest himself of the godlike image within him, and to draw a strained and fanciful parallel between him-

self and the irrational brute. Far different is the situation of him who takes for his guide the unshaken oracles of revelation. Enlightened by this ray of the all-seeing truth, he is infinitely superior to the varying systems of the hour. Fixed in principles, for the certainty of which he has nothing less than divine authority, he scorns the varying systems of the hour, and enters into the maze of science with a clue sufficient to guide him in his researches.

Peculiarly illustrative of these observations is what we are taught respecting those sublime spirits whom the Church, this day, holds up to our veneration. Revelation can be here our only guide; opening, as it does, to our view a new and magnificent creation, an elevated and celestial order of beings, altogether removed from the limited reach of human research. Entering into the views of our holy Mother, my object shall now be to present you with a compendious view of the nature and offices of the holy angels, considered first in their relation to God, and secondly in that which they bear to us.

The word of God, carrying us back through the mist of past ages, to an epoch more remote than that of the formation of this globe, exhibits the Eternal exerting his favorite attributes of goodness in bringing into existence myriads of rational beings, capable of knowing him, their great Creator, and of paying him the homage of their adoration and love. Essentially active, simple, and intelligent, these sublime spirits were not subject to those imperfections and vicissitudes which attend the inhabitants of this material world. Hence, their knowledge was of a far higher and more perfect order, more extended in its range of objects, more refined in its views than any which, in our present state, can be attained by the human mind. In this vast creation, the Almighty distributed his gifts in certain measure and order, forming some with capabilities of sublimer degrees of knowledge and of love, and dealing out to others, according to their respective destinations, a less proportion of his gratuitous favors. To all, however, he imparted a due capacity for happiness, an immortal nature, a will free in its choice of evil or of good. Thus distinguished, these exalted beings were placed, like man, in a state of probation. Heaven, unchangeable felicity, the eternal possession of God himself was to be

the reward of their fidelity. Should they abuse their high prerogatives, indescribable woes, endless remorse, eternal torments were to be their lot. The trial, to prodigious multitudes, was of fatal result. Lucifer, one of the most exalted of these sublime spirits, in an evil hour, conceived a thought of pride. The high endowments with which he had been enriched, swelled his soul with self-conceit, and made him forget the love and homage which he owed his Creator. That instant the curse of heaven fell upon him, and the stern, irrevocable sentence of his reprobation began to operate. All who had shared in his crime participated in his punishment. The superhuman powers, with which the angelic nature had been invested in its first creation, were, however, still discernible in the rebel fiends. Their desecrated forms no longer reflected the pure image of the Deity; yet, they were still spiritual and immortal, still possessed of more than earthly power and knowledge. Hatred against God and all who serve him was the black passion which incessantly haunted and tormented them. The Almighty heard unmoved their horrid execrations, and the choirs of the faithful spirits exulted in the triumphs of his injured justice. These, by a proper exercise of their free will, had given to their Creator that homage which was expected from them in their state of trial, and were called to receive the reward of their fidelity in the unalterable possession of their sovereign good. In the contemplation of the beauty and sovereign perfections of the Godhead, they find, throughout eternity, new sources of delight, new motives of admiration, new subjects of gratitude and praise. Yet, while all are unceasingly occupied in loving and adoring this divine object, their homage is diversified in its expression, according to the peculiar gifts with which they have been respectively enriched. Some are seen absorbed in mute adoration and astonishment; others expressing the ardor of their affection in rapturous strains of love, and others again attendant in ministering and fulfilling the missions and ordinances of their Almighty Lord.

This account of the angels is certain, being derived from divine revelation. A view, too, it is, certainly sublime, and calculated to elevate our notions of that Being whose court is so magnificently composed. For if, beholding the glittering canopy

of the firmament decked with its thousands of resplendent orbs, we are led by the soul-exalting spectacle to admire and praise the Almighty Lord, whose ordinances the whole perpetually obeys, who shall not be exalted into raptures of admiration when he beholds the vast myriads of the celestial hierarchy, the least of whom surpasses in beauty the united splendors of the luminaries of the sky? The next point for our consideration is the office which these sublime spirits perform in our regard.

And here again, my brethren, how grand and elevating is the view which revelation unfolds of the vast family of God, composed of his servants in heaven and on earth, all united by the strong bond of mutual charity, and forming that mystic body, in which to each of the members is distributed a due share of strength and nutriment, a body of which God is the head, and love the vivifying principle. Yes! the angelic hosts, no less than the spirits of the just made perfect by their admission to the sight of God, consider *us* as their fellow-members and the destined sharers of their glory. Intimately united to the great source of love, they have imbibed the most tender feeling of affection in our regard. If he, their Lord, is interested in our welfare, shall they remain insensible? If he labors and sighs for our salvation, shall they regard it with indifference? But what, if he has given us over to them as their peculiar charge? what if he has made them, in our regard, the channels of his mercies? And such is the fact. *He has given*, says the greatest of all authorities, *he has given his angels charge over thee, that they may keep thee in all thy ways.* Indeed, in this, as in many other points, the economy of the world of grace resembles that of the world of nature. In the natural world, we behold a just and orderly dependence of the weak on the strong, the poor on the rich, the infirm on the healthy; in the world of grace, the poor, the weak, the infirm children of mortality are aided in their spiritual necessities by the rich, the powerful princes of Sion, who procure and convey for them abundance of blessings from God, the one, great, exhaustless source of good. Let not the narrow-minded sectary here cavil, and insinuate that any injury is done to God or the divine Author of our redemption by such a species of intercession; or that it would seem to debar us from approaching immediately to the throne of grace. Such

an erroneous conclusion arises from a mistaken view of that great principle of charity which God has established among all his children; a principle by which is perpetuated a communion of good, a mutual reciprocation of benefits; a principle, which, by referring all things to God, unites the voice of earth and heaven in one great canticle of love and praise to the common Lord of the universe.

In honoring these sublime spirits, we honor those whom God himself honors; in petitioning for their succor and intercession, we demand from them no more than we daily beg from our pious friends on earth; with this difference, that, measuring our expressions by their superior power, their sanctity, and peculiar office, we employ, in addressing them, a language of greater confidence and of higher respect. But let us listen to the voice of inspiration. *Behold*, says God himself, by the mouth of the Jewish legislator, *behold, I will send my angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared: take notice of him, and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be contemned: for he will not forgive, when thou hast sinned: and my name is in him. But if thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee. The poor man cried*, says holy David, *and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord shall encamp about them that fear him, and shall deliver them. And the angel came*, says St. John, *and stood before the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God: and the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel. There shall be joy*, says our divine Redeemer, *before the angels of God, over one sinner doing penance;* and again, speaking of little children, he says, *their angels, who are in heaven, always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. Are they not all ministering spirits*, says St. Paul, speaking of the angels, *sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation?*

Let these divine oracles, on so many occasions wonderfully exemplified, respecting the attendance and care of the holy

angels, rouse us to a feeling sense of love and gratitude to God, of respect and devotion to these our heavenly guardians. Let us enter into the views of our heavenly Father, in his having given to us these potent patrons and defenders. Let us remember their presence, invoke their assistance, and, like the patriarch of old, secure, by a holy violence, their efficacious benediction. In effect, the consciousness that whatever we do, even in moments of the greatest secresy, is seen, noticed, and recorded by this our holy and inseparable companion, ought effectually to withhold us from every sinful and unbecoming action. The importance of such a restraint was acknowledged, even by the pagan sages of antiquity. "Receive," says one of their number, "a useful and salutary lesson, with which I would have you to be deeply impressed. Let some virtuous individual be chosen and had by us perpetually in view, that we may live, as if we were always under his eye, and act, as if he were in all things our witness. Greatly would the number of sins be diminished, if on every occasion a witness were present." That, from which this benighted pagan judged so great advantage derivable, the Christian knows to be realized. "The angels," says St. Augustine, "walk with us in all our ways, enter in and go out with us, perpetually observing with what degree of uprightness and fervor we live in the midst of a corrupted world. They rejoice in our joys, and compassionate our sorrows: as often as we act virtuously, the angels are gladdened, the devils are afflicted; as often as we leave the path of rectitude, we afford matter of triumph to the infernal fiends, and rob the angels of that joy which they would have derived from our constancy." "In every place, in every corner," says St. Bernard, "have respect for thy angel. Canst thou dare to do that in his presence, which thou wouldst not do before me?"

But, if such advantage is to be derived from the bare consideration of the presence of our heavenly guardian, what shall we not say, when we reflect on his commission, his power, his desire to succor and protect us? Our spiritual enemy is possessed of malice unbounded, of knowledge and of strength immensely surpassing the utmost power of man. *Our wrestling*, says St. Paul, *is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wicked-*

ness in high places. At all hours, in all places, the tempter is aiming at our destruction; at one time by open assault, at another by concealed approaches, and not unfrequently by bringing upon us temporal calamities. Against so potent a foe, the good angels offer us a ready assistance, a secure defence. "They stand by us," says St. Augustine, "with the greatest care and watchfulness, succoring us, and providing for our necessities. They assist us in our labors, protect us in our rest, encourage us in combat, crown us in victory." "Wo then to us," says St. Bernard, "if, provoked by our sins and our negligences, they should judge us unworthy of their presence and assistance, so that we be reduced to the necessity of exclaiming, with the prophet, *My friends and my neighbors have approached and stood over against me, and those who were near stood afar off, and they that sought my soul used violence.* Hence," continues the same saint, "it is incumbent on us to shun whatever may afford them cause of displeasure, and exercise ourselves in the things which please them. For much there is which gives them joy, and which they delight to see us practise; temperance, chastity, frequent sighs to heaven, prayers poured forth with fervor and with tears." With these devout and fervent sentiments of the great St. Bernard, let us, my friends, for a moment, contrast the practice of the majority of Christians. How vast is the difference! With difficulty we discover a vestige of that piety towards the holy angels, which ages of stronger faith and purer virtue once exhibited. A hasty prayer, in our morning or evening exercise, repeated through custom, without attention and without fervor, is perhaps the only address made to these powerful defenders, with whom God has so kindly provided us. And can we be surprised at the influx of spiritual calamities, which, like a deluge, has swelled to the most frightful extent, and seems ready to swallow up the last remnant of piety and religion? Can we be astonished that falls should be frequent, repentance rare and transient? That faith, charity, fervor should relax, while tepidity, love of the world, insensibility to the things of God and the truths of eternity should have gained so strong an ascendant, and be possessed of so wide an influence? O, my brethren, let me conjure you, by your best interests, your own eternal welfare, never to neglect that efficacious means of

defeating your spiritual adversaries, which God has chosen to place in your hands. Obey the voice of heaven; follow the example and the admonitions of the saints, who surely, on such a subject, merit all your confidence. Diligently follow, promptly obey, the guidance of your celestial guardian. In the midst of your ordinary actions, throughout the day, have recourse to him. In temptations, in dangers, always invoke him. Beseech him to guide your steps, to prosper your actions, to remove from you dangers, and to restrain and counteract the malicious efforts of your spiritual enemy. Thus will you secure the love and friendship of your celestial guardian here, and ensure to yourselves a participation in his glory hereafter.

Sermon L.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost.

BEHOLD I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK.

Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him.—Apoc. iii. 20.

The continued solicitations, with which the Spirit of God urges us to repentance, the earnestness of his desires to take possession of our hearts, and that unwearied patience, with which he waits for our consent, are very strongly expressed in the metaphorical language of my text. The King of Heaven represents himself as a mendicant standing at the door, knocking for admission, and awaiting the good pleasure of the master of the house. *Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him.* In the old law, we find the Almighty addressing the stiff-necked Jews in various manners, and under various characters. He, at one time, strives to reclaim them from their wanderings, by threats of punishment; at another, to retain them in his service, by the promise of both temporal and eternal rewards. As occasion requires, he works upon their fear, their love, their sense of justice, and their feelings of gratitude. He speaks to them, as their future judge, as their ancient friend; now, as a neglected benefactor, now as a relenting parent. How terrible are his menaces, delivered by Moses, in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy! *If thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep and to do all his commandments, which I command thee this day, all these curses shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Cursed shalt*

thou be in the city, cursed in the field. Cursed shall be thy barn, and cursed thy stores. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb and the fruit of thy ground, the herds of thy oxen, and the flocks of thy sheep. The Lord shall afflict thee with miserable want, with the fever and with cold, with burning and with heat, and with corrupted air and with blasting, and pursue thee till thou perish. The heaven, that is over thee, shall be of brass: and the ground thou treadest on of iron. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given to another people, thy eyes looking on, and languishing at the sight of them all the day, and there shall be no strength in thy hand. Thou shalt serve thy enemy, whom the Lord will send upon thee, in hunger, and thirst, and nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put an iron yoke upon thy neck, till he consume thee. And thou shalt eat the fruit of thy womb, and the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, in the distress and extremity, wherewith thy enemy shall oppress thee. Surely, than these threats nothing can be more terrific: but they were not left alone to produce their effect. To them the Almighty joined promises; and listen to what he promised. *If thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, he will make thee higher than all the nations that are on the earth. The Lord shall cause thine enemies, that rise up against thee, to fall down before thy face. One way shall they come out against thee, and seven ways shall they flee before thee. The Lord will send forth a blessing upon thy storehouses, and upon all the works of thy hand. He will make thee to abound with all goods, with the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land. And thou shalt lend to many nations, and shalt not borrow of any one.* Heedless, alike, of these threats and these promises, the perverse nation kept not the covenant of their God, and in his laws they would not walk. After all their perverseness, what paternal fondness does not his language to them breathe, as uttered by the prophets Osee and Isaias. *How shall I deal with thee, O Ephraim, shall I protect thee, O Israel? My heart is turned within me, my repentance is stirred up. I will not execute the fierceness of wrath, I will not destroy Ephraim, because I am God, and not man: the holy one in the midst of thee. Why will you contend with me in judgment? You have all forsaken me, saith the Lord.*

In vain have I struck your children: they have not received correction. Your sword hath devoured your prophets: your generation is like a ravaging lion. Why have my people said: we are revolted, we will come to thee no more? For what shall I strike you any more, you that increase transgression? The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is sad. What shall I do to thee, O Ephraim? what shall I do to thee, O Juda? Your mercy is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth away in the morning. But, as his goodness was repaid with ingratitude, and his warnings received with neglect, his parental tenderness was treated with contempt. He again changes his tone, and, in the voice of close remonstrance and reproach, thus upbraids them with their unaccountable perversity. *Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all ye families of the house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord: what iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain? And they have not said: where is the Lord, that made us come up out of the land of Egypt? that led us through the desert, through a land uninhabited and impassable, through a land of drought and the image of death? And I brought you into the land of Carmel, to eat the fruit thereof, and the best things thereof: and when ye entered in, ye defiled my land, and made my inheritance an abomination. The priests did not say: where is the Lord? and they that held the law, knew me not; and the pastors transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied in Baal, and followed idols. Therefore, will I contend in judgment with you, saith the Lord, and I will plead with your children. Pass over to the isles of Cethim and see, and send unto Cedar, and consider diligently, and see if there hath been done any thing like this. If a nation hath changed their gods, and indeed they are not gods, but my people have changed their glory into an idol. Is Israel a bondman or a home-born slave? Why then is he become a prey? The lions have roared upon him, and have made a noise, they have made his land a wilderness, his cities are burnt down, and there is none to dwell in them. Hath not this been done to thee, because thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God? Thy own wickedness shall reprove thee, and thy apostasy shall rebuke thee. Know thou and see, that it is an evil and a bitter*

thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God. As the thief is confounded when he is taken, so is the house of Israel confounded; they and their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, saying to a stock: thou art my father, and to a stone: thou hast begotten me. They have turned their back to me, and in the time of their affliction they will say: arise and deliver us. Where are the gods, whom thou hast made thee? Let them arise and deliver thee, in the time of thy affliction; for, according to the number of thy cities, are thy gods, O Juda.

In all these passages, my brethren, how forcible, how touching, are the words of the Creator to his rebellious creatures! How dreadful is he in his menaces, how engaging in his promises, how penetrating in his reproofs, how pathetic in his expostulations, how condescending in his entreaties! Still, in the idea conveyed by my text, there is something much more affecting than can be found in these or any other passages of the Old Testament. In whatever character the Almighty addresses the Israelites, the unapproachable dignity of the speaker always discovers itself. To the Jews, he was only a God: he was not their brother. The law of the Israelites was the law of fear and of darkness. The mysterious veil had not yet been rent. The divine and the human natures had not yet been united. The eternal word of the eternal Father had not yet descended from heaven, had not conversed among the children of men, had not expired on a cross. Of consequence, throughout the ancient covenant, the Almighty speaks as God, and not man. But, in the words of my text, he descends from the height of his majesty, throws aside the dazzling splendor of the Godhead, and addresses us as our equal, nay, as our inferior, as our petitioner. He would move us to sympathy, excite us to compassion, and rouse our generosity. *Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him.* This picture occurs in the book of Revelations. It is the last representation, which the author of both the old and the new Testament gives us of himself. After this, the curtain drops, and well it may; for, if terms such as these cannot move our hearts, all further appeal must be useless.

My brethren, I have taken a longer time than usual for the

elucidation of this beautiful passage, and now hasten to point out some of the ways in which the spirit of God operates upon our minds, or, to use the metaphor before us, knocks at the door of our hearts, and, as I proceed, shall mention the various ways in which men harden their hearts against his solicitations. May the same Holy Spirit so second my endeavors that the guilty may feel and be converted, the virtuous be confirmed in goodness, and all of us disposed to reverence and obey his suggestions.

I observe, first, that the Holy Spirit frequently solicits admission into our hearts by the secret whispers of an approving and condemning conscience. When we have performed a virtuous action, resisted and overcome a powerful temptation, or well acquitted ourselves of any part of our duty, he diffuses a sweet complacency through the soul, sends into the heart a pleasing self-approbation, and fills the mind with joy, and peace, and hope. The heaven-descended foretaste of the happiness which goodness shall inherit hereafter is meant to encourage us to perseverance in the practice of virtue, and to counterbalance the little self-denials and privations which attend it. On the contrary, when we are projecting any vicious enterprise, or listening with delight to the syren-voice of the tempter, by means of this same conscience, what checks does he not give us, what anxiety and terror does he strike through the heart! In the very commission of a crime, he gives us warning of its final consequences; he overcasts the mind with horror, and induces a swarm of misgivings and fearful apprehensions, which we in vain try to exclude. If, in spite of all, the crime is perpetrated, and the sinner disposed to take his rest thoughtless and secure, still, by means of his conscience, the Holy Spirit continues to knock at the door of his heart. He raises restless workings in the interior, he forces upon the mind self-condemnation, oppresses the spirits with a sense of guilt, and at intervals shoots a dart of terror through the bosom.

It is thus he tries to reclaim us from evil and incite us to good, by arguments that are felt, by a kind of reasoning which has neither speech nor language, yet makes its awful meaning to be universally understood. But, alas! is there none in this assembly who resists the Holy Spirit by stifling, as much as

may be, the secret motions of conscience, by disregarding its still and quiet voice, by keeping the attention so closely engaged, and the mind so much hurried with the business, pleasures, or amusements of the world, that conscience can never find an opportunity of exerting its due influence? Are there not any who strive to soothe its importunities by illusory promises of a future repentance, by magnifying the goodness of God to the prejudice of his justice, by underrating the guilt or number of their trangressions, and by presumptuously assuring themselves that all will be well in the end? If there be one among us who acts in this manner, that man hears his Saviour at the door, and allows him to stand and knock in vain.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit often asks for admission into our hearts by the various dispensations of his providence. When success smiles upon our endeavors, and prosperity and health pour their blessing around us; when we have escaped some imminent danger, or have been unexpectedly extricated from some distressing perplexity, the Holy Spirit raises such feelings in the heart as may dispose us in all future difficulties to place our hope and confidence in God: he would bring us to reflect that every good and perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights; he would render our obedience to the divine law as ready and as persevering as the kindness of heaven is great and undeserved. But here, alas! how often do we resist the Spirit of God, by ascribing our success to chance, or our own wisdom and industry, or even by casting an envious eye upon those whom we think yet more prosperous and more highly favored! How often, instead of those pious dispositions which the Holy Ghost would inspire, do pride and envy take possession of our breasts? How often does a neglect of God and of religion spring from that very goodness which should have bound our hearts for ever to his service? Or, at the best, after all our experience of the kindness of our heavenly Father; after being delivered, like the Israelites, from the pursuing Pharao, conducted safe through the depths of the sea, refreshed with water from the rock, and satiated with manna in the desolate wilderness, how does the least obstacle terrify us,—how does the slightest difficulty or hardship turn our joy into repining, and change our notes of praise into the murmurs of discontent? murmurs far more inex-

cusable than those of the Jews, inasmuch as we have their example before us, are far better acquainted with the designs of Providence, and know that these very reverses are ordered for our final advantage.

Yes, the Spirit of God is not less frequent in his applications to our hearts in the night of adversity than in the day of prosperity. When we meet with disappointments in our worldly pursuits, when some unforeseen event disconcerts our fond projects, and the vexed heart, disgusted with the world, feelingly acknowledges its unsteadiness and vanity, the Holy Spirit endeavors to turn the peevish fit into a reasonable and durable indifference; he endeavors to use our discontent, as a means of raising our hearts to things above, and of fixing our hopes and affections upon him, who is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. And he commonly succeeds for a season, while our wounds are fresh, and the arrows of adversity are still fixed and rankling in the heart. But, when the smart and anguish have subsided, when the soothing hand of time has healed our bruises, if the world again change its countenance, and smoothen down its features to a smile, our short-lived disgust is converted into greater fondness; our desires and affections, which the Holy Spirit was gradually elevating to things heavenly and spiritual, fall back with increased rapidity, and adhere with stronger tenacity to what is earthly and carnal. Thus the door of the heart is closed more firmly than before against Jesus Christ.

Again, when our friends or relations are summoned from the stage of life, when the solemnity of a last farewell, the sight of their agonies, and the sound of their expiring groans have made some happy impressions and inspired some serious thoughts, it is the endeavor of the Spirit of God to settle these into a lasting sense of the precarious nature of our present existence, to persuade us from their example so to watch that we may never be surprised, and to turn our unavailing grief into a serious purpose of living so innocently, that death may be to us but the gate to a better and a happier life. And, perhaps, while the ghastly look of our departed friends dwell upon our imaginations, and their deep sighs yet sound in our ears, these efforts of grace are not without their effect: some good pur-

poses may be formed; the great work of preparing for judgment may even be commenced. But, hardly have the tears been wiped from the cheek, ere the world, its pleasures and its projects, have erased these happy impressions from our hearts, and convinced us, that, to wean our affections thoroughly from these enchanting vanities, some stronger remedy is requisite. This, too, in his longanimity, the Holy Spirit not unfrequently vouchsafes. Though the sight of another's dissolution has been found ineffectual, there is still room for hope that the near prospect of our own may prove efficacious. The mandate is given, and the arrows of disease stretch us on the wearisome couch. Secluded from the bustle of the world, its temptations and its enjoyments, and presented with the awful prospect of an approaching eternity, the victim of disease now feels, if never before he felt, the worthlessness of worldly pursuits, the folly and danger of vice, the value and importance of religion. The giddy and thoughtless are here rendered serious, the obstinate become tractable, the profligate penitent, the infidel himself believes and trembles. Vice loses all its attractions. Criminal delights, however dear, however loved before, are now lamented with tears of sincere regret: a thousand resolutions are formed of never more yielding to the seductions of sensuality, of never again tasting that intoxicating cup, the dregs of which are so bitter. But lift this child of penitence from his couch of anguish, raise a little and cheer his drooping spirits; remove the fears of dissolution to some small distance, and no more will he remember that he was lately at the gates of death; he will think no more of the wise reflections and good resolutions which he then made; he will have forgotten, that he must soon again stand on the brink of eternity, see virtue and vice as he lately saw them, and pass over to that land whence there is no return, and where no place is found for repentance. Thus, after the door of the heart has been opened, again it is closed, and Jesus is again refused admission.

Time will not permit me to notice all the outward means which the Holy Ghost employs to draw us to righteousness. One more, however, for its frequency and importance, claims our attention. I allude to the exhortations, which you are in

the habit of hearing, on the return of this weekly festival. On these occasions, my brethren, have the words, which entered your ears, ever reached your hearts? Have your breasts ever warmed with love of the virtue which the preacher recommended? Has the faithful portrait which he occasionally holds before you, of vice and depravity, ever excited your detestation? When he has ascended with you above the clouds, and opened heaven to your eyes, have you ever said in your hearts, "It will be good for us to be here?" When he has descended with you to hell, have you ever returned from the view of that gloomy prison, with confirmed resolves to avoid whatever might fix you there for eternity? When he has unfolded to you the danger of deferring repentance, have ever your fears been awakened, has your heart ever smitten you? And when he has spoken of Heaven's mercy and love for the penitent, has the disconsolate ever found a dawn of hope rising in his breast, has the anxious soul ever felt its fears and its griefs charmed to rest? If you have experienced any of these effects, you have felt the operations of the Spirit of God, trying to change your hearts, and raise you to the life of holiness. But have you been diligent in seconding his efforts? Have you not rather resisted and nullified them? Have you not entered the courts of the Lord without a suitable preparation of the heart by meditation and prayer, undesirous and indisposed to be improved? During the time of sermon, have you not, with culpable negligence, allowed your minds to rove upon a thousand frivolous and even sinful ideas? If so, how is the seed of the word to spring up and flourish on a beaten path? At your departure from God's temple, have you not instantly mingled, with your usual ardor, in all the frivolities and amusements of a destructive world? Have you not acted as if you hastened to forget the important instructions which you had heard? If such has been your conduct, my brethren, again you have heard your Saviour knocking at the door of your hearts, and you have again refused him entrance.

To conclude, you have seen some of the principal means which God employs to draw you to himself. It remains that I exhort you to examine, whether you have, on these or on similar

occasions, heard his voice, and made as if you heard it not. If conscience does not herein upbraid you, happy, thrice happy may you be accounted: but, if there be any whom their own conscience condemns, let them take heed, lest He, who has said, *I will come as a thief in the night*, hurry them away, in their state of unpreparedness, to that tribunal, where not to be prepared is to be condemned: an evil, from which I humbly entreat God to deliver you all.

Sermon LX.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

BAD EXAMPLE.

Brethren, I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God, that is given you in Christ Jesus.—1 Cor. i. 4.

Never was joy more reasonable or more pure, than was that expressed in these words of St. Paul. Having labored strenuously by his words, and much more by his example, to guide the Corinthians into the path of true felicity, it was his consolation to see that his exertions had not been fruitless: and, therefore, it was with reason that he exclaimed: *Brethren, I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God, that is given you in Jesus Christ.* My brethren, though not all called, like St. Paul, to undergo the difficulties of a missionary life in behalf of our fellow-mortals, yet there is one trait in his character, which must be carefully copied by every member of Christianity; for every Christian is under a strict obligation of preaching to the whole world by his good example. *Let your lights*, does our divine Redeemer say to us individually, *let your lights so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father who is in heaven.*

Nothing so easily inclines to virtue, nothing so powerfully attracts to vice, as the conduct of those around us. The virtuous behaviour of the good man is a thousand times more impressive than the most eloquent discourse; to vice it is a reproach more sensible than any that language could express. You yourselves, my brethren, will bear testimony to the fact. In the unhappy moment of unlawful indulgence, did not the conduct of one more virtuous than yourselves powerfully invite

your hearts to repentance? Did not his enviable tranquillity, his saintly deportment, his calm and cheerful address, fill you with a secret horror at the mournful situation into which you were plunged? If such be the force of example, as exhibited in the conduct of the virtuous man, what will it not effect, when aided by all the fascinating allurements of vice? Indeed, among the crimes and disorders that disgrace the Christian world, not one can be found, which has not been propagated, sanctioned, and confirmed by example. What, but example, is held out by the libertine, as the apology for his extravagance? by the extortioner, as the defence of his injustices? by the man of fashion, as a sufficient authority for transgressing the inviolable rule of the gospel of Jesus Christ? But *wo to that man*, says the Saviour of the world, *by whom scandal cometh: better were it for him, that a millstone were tied about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.* Oh! you, who by your bad example are an occasion of sin to your neighbor, reflect for a moment on the horrors of your situation. You were bound by the command of the God whom you adore, by the rules of the religion which you profess, to procure the sanctification of those around you; and you have given yourselves to Satan, to become the instrument of their destruction. Oh, what will be your astonishment and confusion, when, arraigned at the tribunal of the God of heaven, you shall behold, rising in judgment against you and calling down vengeance on your devoted heads, the unhappy souls of those whom your ill example has ruined! How will you wish a thousand times, that the ocean had swallowed you up in its waves, and that you had been annihilated from the earth! Say not, that, if you have transgressed, *few* were the witnesses of your transgressions, and that the influence of your example could not extend beyond the limits of your domestic circle. The seduction of one soul, the authorizing of one crime, is an enormity too great to be cancelled by the tears of a repentant world. The soul, the salvation of which you thus undervalue, has been redeemed by the labors, the blood, the death of Jesus Christ. It is therefore his passion which you undervalue; his charity which you oppose. Oh! were our hearts inflamed with genuine zeal, how eagerly should we embrace every opportunity of promoting, by our example, the salvation of our

neighbor? We can hardly be saved or lost alone: our example must guide and attract others, either to happiness or to misery.

And if such be the influence of example in general, what must be the extent of its importance and authority in those who, by fortune, or nature, or grace, are elevated to a more conspicuous view! Yes, the power which riches and dignity confer on their possessors over the temporal condition of others is scarcely more direct, certainly is less extensive, than the influence which, by their vicious or virtuous demeanor, they exercise over the eternal lot of their fellow-creatures. By their conduct are moulded the manners of society. Vice or virtue, piety or irreligion, must reign among mankind, as they shall give their suffrage to the one or to the other; and, though the example of the meanest individual may occasionally inflame our love for virtue, or increase our attachment to vice, it is the conduct of the great which must give credit and authority to either. How often do men complain of the vices and corruption of those around them! How often do they seem to exclaim, with the prophet, that *the enemies of a man are those of his household.* But, may they not discover in themselves the sources of the evil? They first made the defects of others the subject of their conversation and malicious censure, before their own excesses were carried beyond the threshold of their private abode. They first neglected the duties of religion, before those around them forgot its dictates. Had not they been known to increase their stores unjustly, perhaps even at the expense of the orphan and the widow, before the less inexcusable avarice of a domestic purloined that sum, so petty as not to be missed, and yet so much lamented? Had not they habitually vented their anger in oaths and imprecations, till that menial was at length emboldened to venture upon a curse in their presence? The people of Israel would have repaired to Jerusalem, to adore in the true temple the God of their fathers: but alas! induced by example, and emulous of the favour of an idolatrous prince, they with one accord went, says the sacred text, even unto Dan, to adore the calf.

From the influence which the example of the great exercises over society, let us now proceed to consider the effects produced upon children by the conduct of parents. Here, the dominion

of example is absolute. Here, nothing is found to oppose its sway;—no long-confirmed habits, no preconceived opinions. Here, the tender mind, unaided by experience, unguarded by reflection, is subdued at the first assault. Here, in fine, the impressions of example are deep and permanent. In vain are lessons of the purest morality inculcated; in vain are the precepts of parents enforced by the terrors of chastisement: a servile submission to command may be effected, but it is example only that can win the heart. No sooner are the temporary restraints withdrawn, which till then had been but impatiently endured, than the youth rushes with impetuosity to the enjoyment of those gratifications, which domestic example had taught him to view as desirable and to consider as innocent. Nor are we to be surprised at his conduct. Can he believe that the road which he is shown will conduct him to happiness, when those who direct him are following an opposite path? He is told to moderate his desires, to despise the world, and to fear his God; and yet nothing is held up to his view but scenes of sensual indulgence, the turmoils of vanity and ambition; and an entire indifference with regard to the things of eternity. He is told, that charity is the first of human obligations; and he finds, that unjust reflections on the character and actions of others make up the discourse of those around him. The voice of man may, perhaps, bid him seek objects of imitation only among the virtuous and the good: but the voice of nature will tell him to imitate those from whom he received his existence. O Christians! if any thing be capable of inspiring a love for virtue, and of counteracting the violent and innate propensity of man to evil, it certainly must be parental example. Against the abuse of this power it is, that the anathema of Christ is principally directed. *Wo to him that scandalizes one of these little ones.* Parents, is your tender offspring the object of your earnest solicitude? Be careful, that, while you instil into their opening minds sentiments of piety and virtue, you convince them, by the conformity of your life with your doctrine, of the truth and sincerity of your instructions. Better were it that the helpless babe should be torn from your arms and put to the most cruel of deaths, than that it should perish eternally by your example, and should appear at the bar of

heaven in judgment against you. If you love your children, let your pious and virtuous example be the testimony of your affection. Imitate the truly parental conduct of St. Paul, who first exemplified in his own life the sublime lessons which he inculcated to his followers. Thus shall your memory be loaded with benedictions. Thus will you form citizens of heaven.

And now, my brethren, let us advert to a subject, which, in a peculiar manner, regards those whose happiness it is to adore the God of truth, in a religion which no other than himself has established. In the midst of a world, over which error and infidelity possess so wide a sway, our conduct cannot fail of being regarded as a test of the sanctity of the religion which we profess. By the majority of mankind, all abstract reasoning and argumentative proofs will be received with indifference. It is only the exemplary conduct of the true believer that possesses at once the power to convince and to persuade. This is a language which is listened to with respect: a mute language, which men of all nations, of all opinions, of all capacities, cannot but understand; a language, in fine, which, if employed in the cause of truth, acts with resistless influence on the human heart. We often lament over those whose misfortune it is to wander in the uncertain paths of error; but have we not reason to fear, that, by our bad example, their return to the way of truth has been opposed and impeded? We complain, that the purity of our tenets is maliciously called in question, and our doctrine misinterpreted by those who oppose us: but have we not, by our irregular conduct, justified such insinuations? We pray that those who have strayed from the unity of faith may be recalled from the error of their ways; but may we not tremble lest we have rendered ourselves answerable for their wanderings? They behold in us the same eager pursuit after pleasure, the same unjustifiable aggressions on the character and property of others, and they naturally exclaim: "Where is the sanctity of the God of Israel?" They hear that our doctrine is from heaven, and they behold our affections centred on the earth. Oh! my brethren, if we are not called, like St. Paul, to abandon friends and country, for the propagation of the truths of the gospel, nor courageously to seal our doctrine with our blood, we are still bound to give a no less convincing proof of

our attachment to the cause of God, a no less ardent testimony of affection for our neighbor, in the pure and edifying example which we hold out to his view. Let me, then, admonish every one to make this particular the subject of serious self-examination. Let no one flatter himself into a false security. There is not in society a single individual, who may not justly tremble, lest at some unhappy moment he has occasioned or authorized some of those immoralities in which the world abounds: no one, but may exclaim, with the prophet, "From my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord; and from the sins of others spare thy servant."

If, to any, conscience can point out the fatal occasion, when, by the neglect of duty or the indulgence of passion, by private indiscretion, or by public excess, he endangered the virtue of others, let him diligently consider the heinousness of his offence; let him hasten to the tribunal of God's mercy, before he be summoned to that of his justice. Let him, as he values the salvation, repair, as far as lies in his power, the injury which he has offered. Let him leave nothing unattempted, to recall those whom his misconduct may have seduced. Let us all, by the sanctity of our future life, testify to mankind our respect for the duties which we have hitherto neglected. Let us give to virtue the credit and authority of which we have deprived her; to God the glory, which through our misconduct has been withheld.

And, to turn now to another most important point, while we endeavor to make amends for our past misconduct, and to avoid in future the great guilt of inducing others to sin, let us at the same time guard with all our vigilance against the unhappiness of being perverted ourselves. For, as our example influences others, so the example of others must have its influence upon us; upon all of us, but especially upon the young.

Yes, my younger brethren, if you would retain the righteous principles which you have imbibed, if you would preserve your virtue unpolluted, keep as far as possible out of the reach of bad example. Shun vicious society, as you would a serpent. *Be not delighted in the paths of the wicked, neither let the way of evil men please thee. Flee from it, pass not by it, go aside and forsake it:* for *evil communications corrupt good manners.*

This sentence, from an ancient poet, which is quoted by St. Paul in his first epistle to the Corinthians, had, even in the pagan world, gained universal assent, and has been received in all ages, as an unquestionable maxim. *Evil communications corrupt good manners.* Who, though in full health and strength, would think of visiting the place where an epidemical disease ravaged all before it? Believe me, or rather believe the great and the good of all times and all nations, the company of the wicked is yet more dangerous, yet more contagious, and will, sooner or later, bring death to your soul. For, tell me, upon what terms do you intend to converse with these evil companions, with whom I suppose you to be unhappily connected? You must either approve or disapprove them. If you approve them, there can be no doubt but you will imitate and resemble them. If you disapprove them, and continue steadfast in that disapprobation, there will probably soon be an end of your intercourse, and you may possibly come off unhurt: though this is by no means so certain as you may suppose, particularly if your meetings be frequent. For it is not in your power to tell what weight their arguments will have upon your mind; and, be assured, they will use every argument which they conceive may be of weight; for the abandoned are very unwilling to have any person with whom they converse better than themselves, that the virtue of others may not give pain to their own reflections. As men of this class are in general very ignorant, or, at the best, very superficial, you might, indeed, with ease, refute their sophistry, and on the footing of fair reasoning, show the futility of all their objections. But they have a kind of reasoning of their own, a method of argumentation, which will baffle your skill, confuting at once all your arguments; and that is ridicule. A loud laugh, a ludicrous jest, or a little well-timed mockery, will render all you say insignificant, and make you feel very uneasy in yourself, and appear very laughable in the sight of others. This may be called the stronghold of the vicious; and few, believe me, very few have fortitude enough to withstand the sallies which are made from this quarter. There are many who will remain unmoved under persecution, many will bid defiance to acutest pains, death itself has been met with joy; but the finger of scorn, the sneer of ridicule, who hath stood, or who can

stand? If, then, my brethren, you value your own souls, if you possess the least share of that humility which teaches you to be fully sensible of your own frailty, if you pretend to any of that saving prudence, which bids you shun the very shadow of danger, never trust yourselves a second time in that company where you have found good principles bantered and derided, and where this successful engine of corruption, ridicule, is played with all its force against virtue and religion.

But, there are other reasons to fear lest your morals should suffer from evil communications, though at present you condemn what you see wrong in your companions. It is our nature to behold with gradually decreasing horror, as we grow familiarized to the sight, the objects which once chilled our blood. However you may, at first, disapprove the loose language and criminal actions of your associates, be assured that you will find that disapprobation sensibly diminish as you accustom yourselves to hear such language and to see such actions. This very allowance is a large stride in wrong. You have lost, immediately on this permission, the pure and undefiled guard of virtue; and, when once an avenue, however small, is open to vice, it is the nature of the insinuating monster to creep in more and more, till she has wormed herself into the very inmost heart.

Besides, the nature of friendly society is such, that it must have consent of parties. Meetings of this kind are designed for pleasure and satisfaction; and, as every youth of a good disposition finds in himself a desire to render himself agreeable to those with whom he converses, this very principle, amiable and excellent as it is, will itself greatly increase your danger in bad company. Though many things may be said, proposed, and done, which your better sentiments totally disapprove, yet, unwilling to disturb the harmony of the social circle, reluctant to give offence, and fearing the stigmatizing appellation of singularity, you will run the same length of riot with your companions, and, contrary to your sounder judgment, will plunge, perhaps, into evils which you may find cause to lament all the rest of your life. And further, if you happen to possess a good share of spirits and vivacity, think when your blood flows with a quickened circulation, when all is cheerful, all is alive, when

the riot increases, and mirth mounts into madness, oh! think how easily you may be thrown entirely off your guard, and be carried, by those spirits, which now no longer obey the rein of reason, into actions bad as the worst of those which are sometimes the boast of the dissolute.

My brethren, I have hitherto reasoned upon principles congenial to our nature, and common to all men, such as operate invariably and almost irresistibly upon us, and, consequently, such as prove, to a demonstration, that *evil communications will corrupt good manners.* There is one other such principle in human nature, which tends still more to confirm what I have advanced, and it is our proneness to imitation. This proneness is so general, that, from the cradle to the grave, our life is almost all imitation. Few think or act for themselves. The generality of men form their opinions and manners upon the opinions and manners of others. And, in social life, we no sooner admire, than we are led to imitate. Indeed, friendly society, being based upon a similarity of manners, can never be supported, unless that similarity be preserved. It cannot be supposed that, if you converse with the vicious, you will be divested of this common principle of our nature. It is, on the contrary, certain, that this principle will have its influence upon you. Your thoughts, your speech, your actions, will be formed upon the model of those of your companions. By being among them, you will soon become one of them. Then, farewell all the hopes of your affectionate parents, farewell all the fond prospects of your felicity, wherewith they had flattered themselves: and, for yourselves, farewell the body in health, the mind at peace, the conscience serene and applauding. Farewell tranquillity on earth, and the hope of eternal tranquillity in Heaven.

But, there are, perhaps, here present some who, though they frequent the company of the vicious, have not yet felt these lamentable effects. Such, if such there are, may at this moment be balancing what they think their own experience, against what they call the exaggerated declamation of the preacher. They may, perhaps, be saying in their hearts, "For fear of imaginary dangers, are we to forego pleasures so real? Are associates so delightful to be forsaken, merely because they, now and then, indulge in a few pardonable frolics, and occasionally speak with

too great freedom on subjects connected with morality and religion? Their vices affect not us. We can enjoy the delights afforded by their amiable qualities, without extracting the poison of such as are noxious. Our experience tells us so." My brethren, I beseech you, reason not thus. Delude not yourselves. You may, hitherto, have escaped partially unhurt. But, is the pilot wise, who, when he sees the shattered remnants of too venturous vessels, the wrecks of former voyagers, floating around him, needlessly remains upon a dangerous sea, beset on every side with rocks, on which his ship may at any moment strike,—remains, merely because she has not yet struck. Oh! my brethren, rely upon the experience of ages, rather than your own. Though, even that, what does it tell you? Does the profane jest, the immodest innuendo, strike you now with as much horror as before you entered this licentious society? Perhaps, as yet, you do not join in irreligious discourse; but does no self-condemning smile ever embolden the impious tongues of your associates? Is your relish for piety as high as it used to be? does not the time which you spend in the exercises of devotion, in public or in your families, begin to grow tedious? If, my brethren, you feel any of these symptoms of expiring virtue and nascent vice, where is your love of God, where is your zeal for salvation, if, with such evidence of disease already contracted, you again enter the infected place, and again breathe the air of contagion? Consider the ultimate consequence of your conduct. God has expressly declared, that a *companion of fools shall be destroyed. Their house*, says the inspired Solomon, *is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.* Ask yourselves sometimes, how can we dwell with devouring fire? how can we lie down in everlasting burnings? How will you endure these torments yourselves, and in what temper, with what reflections, will you meet the partners of your guilt and folly there! Alas! my brethren, in those seats of horror and despair, all that rendered your intercourse on earth delightful will have come to an eternal period. There will be no opportunities for you and your companions to gratify your sensual desires together, no delicious viands, no intoxicating liquors, no gay tales, no cheerful songs; but, instead of these, blackness of darkness for evermore; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth; the worm that never

dies, and the fire that shall never be quenched. Will it then be any relief to you to look back on those days which you shared in luxury and sin? Will your friendship still continue, and will you be endeavoring, by tender condolences and obliging offices, to alleviate the miseries of each other? Alas! hell is not the seat of friendship, but of everlasting enmity and rage. All its wretched inhabitants will live in perpetual discord and mutual abhorrence, and, no doubt, your keenest resentments will burn against those who have been your partners in sin, as your aggravated damnation will in part be owing to them. And on the same principle their indignation will rise against you; and thus you will lie for ever, continually exercising all the enlarged capacities of your minds, to increase the torments of each other. Walk, then, no longer in a road, which, however delightful, assuredly leads to such accumulated horrors. Flight, instant flight, is your only security.

Sermon LX.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable, who can know it?
JEREM. xvii. 9.

THE traveller, who would boast of having stood on the summit of the highest of the Alps, before he arrives at the foot of that which is to end his toil, must in his road scale many a hill, smaller indeed than that to which he is hastening, but still of laborious and difficult ascent. In like manner, whoever would arrive at the perfect love of God and of his neighbor, the summit of Christian sanctity, must subdue many a stubborn vice, and acquire many an eminent virtue, before he can well be said to have commenced his ascent of the mount of perfection;—above all, he must thoroughly know himself. Now, he only knows himself, who has a clear and distinct insight into the state of his soul, so as to be well aware of the particular passions which most endanger his salvation, and fully convinced of the various faults and imperfections which reign within him. Such a self-knowledge is justly regarded as the first requisite for a Christian life. The life of a Christian should be a continued series of triumphs over those passions which continually beset him, and an uninterrupted exercise of such virtues, as become his condition in life. But, without self-knowledge, vain were the attempt to conquer the passions. To repel their assaults, is found, by the man who is well acquainted with himself, to be sufficiently arduous. 'Tis true, he defends a fortress, the weaknesses and defects of which he has examined and cautiously guards; but his enemies are powerful, numerous,

and artful: he may, at some unwary moment, be surprised by the cunning, or overpowered by the vigor and resolution, of the assailants. But, if the situation of this man be critical, how desperate must be his, who, far from keeping a constant guard over those passes and avenues of his soul which are the least capable of standing an assault, regards them, in idle security, as the side on which he has nothing to dread! Shall not an enemy, powerful and numerous, succeed, where a much feebler foe could not fail of success? Can the most crafty adversary miss an advantage, which the most artless would perceive and pursue?

And if the conquest over the passions be hopeless without self-knowledge, equally hopeless is the practice of virtue; especially of those virtues which should form the most prominent features in the character of the Christian. Self-knowledge is to humility what the root is to the flower, the foundation to the building, the fountain to the current: without self-knowledge it cannot exist. For humility, according to the humble St. Bernard, consists in a contempt of ourselves: but how can we contemn ourselves, unless we see and know that we are contemptible?

The practice of charity, likewise, requires a considerable degree of self-acquaintance. For the less a person is sensible of his own failings, the less is he disposed to make allowances for the failings of another. Looking upon himself as perfect, he will expect to find equal perfection in his fellow-creatures; and, when he perceives in them foibles and blemishes, which will often happen, he will animadvert on them with all the censoriousness of conscious superiority. Frequently will he desire to extract a mote from the eye of his brother, while a beam is in his own.

Patience is another virtue, never to be acquired without the study of ourselves. The man, who is unacquainted with himself, when censured or defamed, naturally looks on the injury as unpardonable; for, unconscious of the existence of those infirmities which have given rise to the imputation, he naturally attributes it to mere malignity. He, on the contrary, who has been in the habit of studying his own character, has already discovered much more evil in himself than it is possible for any

other person to upbraid him with; and he is so far from being surprised or chagrined at what he hears, as often to wonder that he hears nothing worse.

Finally, self-knowledge is of the greatest service, in all religious exercises, particularly in the important duty of prayer. Self-ignorance is the necessary mother of indevotion. For he, who does not know himself, will ever be insensible of his spiritual wants; and he, who is insensible of his spiritual wants, will seldom apply to heaven for that support, of which he does not feel the need; and, if for form sake he does apply, his petitions will be so cold and spiritless, as to merit the neglect of him who has said: *Ask and you shall receive, yet so if you ask not amiss.* Nothing but a strong feeling of our own poverty and deficiencies can inspire us with that fervor which alone can secure a favorable hearing. Nor less needful is self-knowledge, in that other part of prayer, when, instead of petitioning for fresh favors, we return thanks for the blessings already received. The Christian, who knows himself, will melt into gratitude for graces, which the self-ignorant man undervalues, and perhaps despises; for, knowing himself, he knows that he deserves nothing, and therefore is thankful for every thing.

But, if self-knowledge is of such importance, how happens it to be so rare? To know ourselves, might be thought no difficult task; for who, it may be asked, can be ignorant of himself? If a man thinks at all, he cannot be a stranger to what passes in his own heart; he must be conscious of his own thoughts and desires; he must remember his past pursuits, and the true motives that in general have directed the actions of his life; he may hang out false colors and deceive others; but how can a man deceive himself? Specious, indeed, this reasoning is; but, unhappily, both the scripture, in the words of my text, and daily experience, prove that it is only specious. Nothing can be a more palpable proof of man's deficiency in self-knowledge, than the high opinion which he generally entertains of himself. While all, who know him, are declaiming against his vices and ridiculing his follies, this object of the invective and of the laughter of his neighbors is enraptured at the contemplation of his own excellence. His faults, if he admit their existence at all, are weaknesses inseparable from human nature; his virtues

singular and peculiar to himself. But, if a neighbor, to whose observation so few of our failings lie open, can observe in our conduct so many more defects than we, how little can we know of ourselves! Man, then, not only can, but generally does, deceive himself; and self-knowledge is far from being a common or an easy acquisition.

Now, to succeed in any enterprise of difficulty and danger, it is of the first importance to have a full knowledge of the difficulties to be encountered and the dangers to be shunned. Your consciousness of this will, I hope, procure me a favorable hearing, while I endeavor to point out the various obstacles that impede or arrest our progress in the science of ourselves; a science, which, as I have already shown, every man must learn, who has his salvation at heart.

The fundamental cause of self-ignorance is want of self-examination. Men know little of themselves, because they seldom reflect on themselves. For a transient, hasty glance, such as the generality of men are content with, cannot discover all the bents and tendencies of the soul, those standing features and lineaments of the inward man. Besides, our passions are not always in motion, but retire now and then, into the secret recesses of the heart, where they lie concealed, till a fresh occasion calls them forth again. And it is generally in these intervals of composure that we turn our eyes upon ourselves. When the powers of the mind are already engaged in the pursuit of some other object, it is not without greater exertion than most men are willing to make, that they can be recalled, and chained down to the unpleasant task of self-examination. For, before we can with ease and pleasure take a view of our interior, we must have our desires lulled into repose, and our thoughts collected; in a word, we must become temporary hermits, inattentive to all the impressions of sense. And it is not surprising if he, who only in such moments turns his thoughts upon himself, mistakes present composure for habitual serenity, and momentary good dispositions for settled principles of virtue, which, though they may be obscured in the dark hour of violent temptation, yet never fail to emerge from the cloud with their original splendor.

But, were a person both willing and able on all occasions to

commune with his own heart, still numberless causes concur to render it extremely difficult for him to pass an impartial judgment on himself. Among these, that self-love, which was born with him, has grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, is one of the most considerable. Where our reputation or interest is at all concerned; where there are the remotest considerations of self connected with the point before us; what a strange bias does that circumstance give to the mind, and how difficult it is entirely to disengage our judgments! With what reluctance are we brought to think evil of a friend whom we have long loved and esteemed! how apt are we to overlook, or palliate, the strongest appearances that may stand against him! and to assign the best and kindest motives for the worst and most unjustifiable actions! Man is still a worse casuist, is the dupe of a much stronger prejudice and prepossession, when judging of himself, that dearest of all parties, so closely connected with him, so much and so long beloved. It is not an easy matter to be just where there is such an impulse to be kind.

Besides this prime source of self-deceit, there is another, equally dangerous and delusive. It consists in the false judgments which we form of different vices, according to our age, disposition, rank in life, or the alternate ebbs and flows of our passions. Close consideration would soon convince us that there are many actions, equally bad and vicious in themselves, which are held by us in very different degrees of detestation. Those faults, which nature or custom has made familiar to us, and to which an unresisted passion still keeps us enslaved, are decked out and painted in all the false colors that a soft and flattering hand can give them; while others, to which we feel no propensity, appear at once naked and deformed, surrounded with all the marks of their real guilt, folly, and dishonor.

This species of self-delusion is beautifully unfolded in the history of David and Nathan. David, to the gratification of a base passion, had sacrificed a faithful and valiant servant, whose fidelity he should have cherished, and whose valor he should have rewarded. Nathan, the prophet, was commissioned by God to bring the adulterous murderer to a sense of his guilt. Instead of declaring his real errand, the prophet comes to him with a fictitious complaint, regarding a cruel act of injustice committed

by one of his subjects, and frames a case, not so parallel to David's as by awakening suspicion to prevent a patient hearing, and yet not so void of resemblance as to fail of striking, when shown in a proper light; while the whole was so tenderly addressed to the heart and passions, that it could not but excite horror and indignation in the hearer. *And Nathan said unto him, there were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many sheep and oxen. But the poor man had nothing at all but one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up, and which had grown up in his house together with his children, eating of his bread, and drinking of his cup, and sleeping in his bosom: and it was unto him as a daughter. And when a certain stranger was come to the rich man, he spared to take of his own sheep and oxen, to make a feast for that stranger, who was come to him, but took the poor man's ewe, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger being exceedingly kindled against that man, he said to Nathan: As the Lord liveth, the man that has done this thing is a child of death. And Nathan said to David, thou art the man.* Indeed he was worse than the man, if the sins of adultery and murder are more heinous than a petty oppression. Yet so far was he blinded by his present passion, so provoked and exasperated at the fictitious offence, as sincerely to condemn, and, beyond the utmost rigor of the law, sentence to death a man infinitely more innocent than himself. He has no suspicion, that, in condemning the unknown oppressor, he is pronouncing his own condemnation. It is necessary for the prophet to say to him, in plain terms, *thou art the man.* Nor is this sufficient. All the aggravating circumstances of his crime must be enumerated, the whole detail of his guilt has to be held before his eyes, before he can be brought to a sense of his own criminality and to that feeling confession, *I have sinned against the Lord.*

Thus the case still stands with us. When the passions are warmed, and the sin which presents itself exactly tallies with the desire, how unconcernedly does a man rush into it, in spite of every principle of honor or of justice? Talk to him, the moment after, upon the nature of some other vice, to which he is not addicted, and from which his age, his temper, or his rank in life secures him, and how well he reasons, what honest indig-

nation he expresses against it, how insensibly his anger kindles against *the man who hath done this thing!*

Again, the number is not small of those, who judge of themselves, not by a direct examination of their own hearts, but by forming a comparison between their lives and actions and those of others. When a person is entering on the work of self-examination, he frequently looks around, instead of looking within. He soon finds, or thinks he finds, one more malicious, another more covetous, a third more proud and imperious than himself, and thus indirectly forms his judgment of himself, not by reviewing his life and proving his works, as the apostle directs, but by drawing, from the infirmities and defects of others, a delusive conclusion in favor of himself. In such competitions, there will always be so much self-love, as to draw a flattering likeness of one of the parties; and, in all likelihood, so much malignity, as to give but a coarse picture of the other. The self-ignorant Pharisee, of whom the Gospel speaks, fell into both these faults. He no sooner saw the publican, but he formed to himself the idea of all the vices that could possibly enter the man's character, and, contrasting them with his own imagined virtues, took an occasion of triumph and joy, where he ought to have been penetrated with sorrow and shame.

But, let these comparisons of ourselves with others be ever so impartially conducted, they are nevertheless worthless. Before we can form a correct estimate of our moral character, we must consider our conduct, not with relation to the conduct of others, but with relation to the divine law. By our conformity with that law, we must stand or fall. If we suppose that the greater guilt of others will diminish our own, or that what we see daily practised by persons whose reputation stands fair with the world must therefore be lawful, we have fallen into speculative as well as practical errors, have corrupted our first principles, and defiled our morals in their very source. For the practice of others is no rule, and never will be accepted as an apology for us. At the last day, we shall be judged, not by the notions and common practice of men, but by the commandments of God. He will not inquire, whether there have been others much worse than ourselves, or whether we have been as good as the generality of mankind; but, whether we have fulfilled what

his law and right reason dictated. This is the standard of right and wrong: this the balance of the sanctuary in which our actions are to be weighed. Hence, our Saviour has so emphatically warned us, that unless we are much better than the generality, we can never save our souls; *for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who enter thereat; but narrow is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are who find it.*

Numbers are misled by taking opinions, which they hear others deliver concerning them, as the standard, by which they judge of themselves. But the opinions which others form of us are in general very ill founded; for most men judge with inward prepossession, all by outward appearances, and therefore think and speak of us very much at random. Besides, their verbal professions are, not unfrequently, much at variance with the sentiments of their hearts. There are men, too, who persuade themselves that they have those virtues which they really want, by mistaking and substituting some solitary acts, which they have performed, for settled habits. The luxurious man, for instance, who can prevail on himself to observe the fasts of the Church, suffers his imagination to dwell for ever on his fortitude and self-command. He feels indignant, that there should be men who, deaf to the calls of the Church, can riot in dainties and profusion, while the Christian world is engaged in the practices of penance. From any censures of men or reproaches of conscience he appeals to action and to knowledge, and thus concludes himself to be a mortified man, because he practices one act of mortification.

Again, many never arrive at the true knowledge of themselves, because they begin the examination of their works before they are prepared to amend the faults which they may discover. For, if a man is not sincerely disposed to reform his faults, he will not be inclined to see them; he no longer performs the office of a judge, but of an advocate, whose business is, not to discover, but skilfully to conceal, the truth.

The last error which I shall notice is, perhaps, more general than any. All those fall into it who, when engaged in investigating their actions, leave out of the calculation the most important part of them; I mean the motives upon which they

were performed. Even at the moment of action, many are ignorant of the real principles by which they are governed. The honor of God and the interest of religion have often been the apparent and supposed ends, when secular interest and secret vanity have been the hidden and the true. Many, like Jehu, have thought themselves transported with genuine zeal, when they have been animated only by the heat of their natural passions. Many have supposed themselves to be charitably giving wholesome admonitions to others, when they have been only venting their own spleen. Many a seeming act of friendship and generosity has proceeded from a principle of selfishness, unperceived by him whom it actuated. And if we are thus deluded even in the moment of action, the delusion will often continue when the deed is done; and thus our actions may appear very different in our own eyes, and in the eyes of God, who seeth not as man seeth; for *man seeth those things which appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart.*

Such are the rocks on which many split, who would arrive at self-knowledge; and I have pointed them out, not only that they may be carefully avoided, but also that they may serve, as so many landmarks, to direct us into that secure haven, the knowledge of ourselves. For, if men fail in their pursuit of self-knowledge on account of carelessness in self-examination, and of the partiality of self-love, through the influence of present passions, through delusive comparisons of themselves with others, from a vain dependence on the opinion of the world, by the substitution of single acts for habits, by neglecting to furnish themselves with the requisite dispositions, and by omitting to explore the true springs of their actions, the consequence is unavoidable, that whoever wishes to succeed in the attainment of self-knowledge must pursue an opposite course. He must frequently scrutinize his actions with the most critical exactness, the most piercing curiosity. This duty is in part performed by an examination of conscience at our evening prayers, when we recall to memory the actions and omissions of the past day, lament our failings, and resolve to reform them. But this only gives us a view of our conduct for that one day. Now, there are many undoubted duties, which are not obligatory every day, and which are not necessarily attached to any par-

ticular portion of our time. The omission of such duties we may easily overlook, or palliate, in our daily examinations; and thus we may continue to defer, from day to day, some of the most essential obligations of life, without perceiving that we are grossly and criminally neglectful. To remedy this inconvenience, we should at stated seasons retire from the hurry of business and of pleasure, and make a general review of our lives. Hence the teachers of spirituality have so strongly recommended us to make an occasional retreat for a few days, in order to brush from our souls that dust of the world, which they are apt to contract in our intercourse with society. In this light, St. Leo and many others have considered the ecclesiastical institutions of Lent and Easter, Advent and Christmas. And it is undoubtedly the spirit of the Church, that every man should set apart certain times for more continued prayer and more serious recollection; without which, it is morally impossible to form just notions of our religious duties, and to acquire a due knowledge of God and of ourselves. If, in some circumstances, this be impracticable, still, Sundays and holidays of obligation are, or ought to be, leisure days. Two or three hours, every Sunday, or every other Sunday, spent in meditating upon God's law, and upon the manner in which we comply with it; in reflecting upon our failings, and the means by which they may be amended; in exciting ourselves to repentance for the past and to good resolutions for the future; may be an excellent, though interrupted, retreat, and may greatly facilitate our progress in the knowledge of ourselves. During these examinations, we must always be careful to remember, how difficult it is to pass an equitable sentence, where the same person is both judge and criminal; and we must counterbalance the influence of self-love and the prepossession of passion, by considering that, however we decide now, there will be a rehearing at another court, where judgment will be given according to truth. We must not lull our remorse, with the remembrance of crimes more atrocious than our own, or believe that we are not bad, while another can be found worse; but, on the contrary, we should keep our eyes fixed on those bright models of sanctity, whom the Church proposes to our imitation, who, though really the greatest of men, sincerely reputed themselves the least. We must not place any

reliance on the misguided opinions which others may have concerning us, nor pay any regard to the flattering language of our friends; but should, rather, lend a willing ear to the reproaches of our adversaries. For an enemy, by making a stricter search into us, will discover every flaw and imperfection of our temper; and, though his malice may set them in too strong a light, he will generally have some ground for his censures. By attending, therefore, to his accusations, we shall see the worst of ourselves, and shall have our eyes opened to many a blemish and defect, which otherwise we might never have observed. We must, besides, bring ourselves to a full resolution of reforming whatever we may find in ourselves defective; and must trace all our good actions to their springs and sources; never forgetting, that, however beautiful or splendid their appearance, if they arose from any improper motive, their splendor is darkness, their beauty is deformity, in the eye of reason and religion.

Finally, would we know ourselves, we must frequently converse, not only with ourselves in consideration, but with God in prayer. In the lowest prostration of soul, we must beseech him to call forth light out of darkness, and disclose to us the depth and devices of our hearts; for, without the influence of his divine illuminations, our hearts, after all our care and pains to know them, will certainly deceive us, and self-love will so prejudice the understanding as to keep us still in self-ignorance.

Sermon LXX.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

DUTIES OF PARENTS.

The girl is not dead, but sleepeth.—Matt. ix. 24.

My brethren, I much fear, that the words of my text may be reproachfully applied to many in this assembly. The words, I am afraid, are but too applicable to the generality of parents. Their children are not dead! No! the principles of vitality are yet within them! they might yet be alive to God and to their duty: but they are in a state of apathy, in a spiritual stupor, insensible to every sentiment of religion. And why so?—through the neglect, the criminal neglect of their parents. They are asleep; because their parents will not awaken them. They know nothing of religion; because their parents will not instruct them: they do not love virtue; because their parents will not show them its loveliness: they do not follow after goodness; because their parents will not set them the example. You see at once, my brethren, how I apply the words of my text, and what will form the subject of my discourse. I frankly tell you, and tell it with sorrow and with shame, that, ever since I came among you, I have witnessed the fatal effects of the neglect of parental duties. My brethren, the minister of religion may discourse, may exhort, may instruct, may reprove; and all will be to no purpose, unless his efforts be seconded by the exertions of parents. Let me, therefore, at once make my appeal to you. I can do nothing without your assistance; and, though it may seem surprising that a stranger should feel a stronger interest in the welfare of your offspring than you do yourselves, let that very circumstance be a motive for you to

listen with the greater attention, while I plead the cause of the weak and the helpless—of little tender creatures, who are incapable of pleading for themselves, and do not even know how much their interest is concerned.

Far better would it have been, had your little ones never seen the light, if, after having given them existence, you neglect the proper culture of their faculties, and suffer their yet flexible inclinations to turn to objects which will involve them in guilt and misery. Those barbarians, who are said to expose their newborn babes to immediate destruction, are, in the eyes of reason and religion, less cruel than such parents. Therefore, as a prelude to this series of instructions, I will, this morning, first state the principal motives which should excite parents to a punctual discharge of this important duty, and then conclude with some plain directions.

Before I touch upon motives of a more awful kind, I cannot help noticing the pleasantness of the occupation. I speak not merely of the pleasure arising from the consciousness of discharging a present duty, and the probable hope of future success. Such a satisfaction may attend actions, which are in themselves most painful and mortifying. But I refer to the pleasure immediately flowing from the employment itself. The God of nature has wisely annexed a secret unutterable delight to all your cares for the improvement of your rising offspring; you rejoice to see your tender plants flourish, to observe how the stem strengthens, and the blossoms and the leaves successively unfold. You trace, with a gradually advancing pleasure, their easy smiles, the first efforts of speech on their stammering tongues, and the dawnings of reason in their feeble minds. It is a delightful office to cultivate and assist opening nature, to lead the young strangers into a new world, and to infuse the principles of any useful kind of knowledge which their age may admit and their circumstances require. But, when you attempt to raise their thoughts to the great Father of spirits, to present them, as in the arms of faith, to Jesus, the compassionate Shepherd, and teach them their obligations to him; when you instruct them in the principles of divine truth, and form them to sentiments of integrity and devotion, you must enjoy a pleasure far superior to what any other labor for their improvement can afford. You,

my brethren, who carefully comply with this essential obligation, do you not find, that the sweetest truths of Christianity, which are your hope and your joy in this land of your pilgrimage, are peculiarly sweet when you talk them over with your children? Do you not find that your instructions and admonitions to them return into your own bosom, with a rich increase of edification and refreshment? Yes! while you are watering these domestic plantations, you are watering also yourselves; and, from these holy conversations with your children, you rise to more endearing communion with your heavenly Father.

My brethren, so delightful is this duty, that the parent, whose breast is not entirely devoid of parental feelings, would comply with it, for the sake of the gratification with which it is attended; while so strict is the law which requires parents to instruct their offspring, that, were the task painful and disgusting, it must still be performed. I should offer an insult to your reason, by attempting to prove the existence of such a law. You would unhesitatingly pronounce that man unworthy to live, who, through his own neglect, should allow his children to starve for want of food: and is he less guilty, who recklessly permits them to perish for ever, through the want of spiritual nourishment? The obligation, I repeat it, is most evident; but, so clearly and so beautifully is it stated in the book of Deuteronomy, that I will repeat the text. *These words*, says the Almighty, *which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up, commanding them to observe, and to do, and to fulfil all that is written in this law.*

If, my brethren, you neglect the performance of so strict a command, is it surprising that the Almighty, in punishment of your disobedience, should permit the endearing objects of your warmest affections to be exposed to every species of evil in this life, and plunged at length in everlasting miseries? This is not only the probable effect of the just anger of Heaven, but also the natural consequence of your own negligence. Yes! the more I consider the perils by which youth is continually surrounded, the stronger is my conviction, that it is all but impos-

sible for any to escape perdition, whose minds have not received early impressions of virtue from the parental hand. Youth is called the spring of life, the flower of our years, the season of enjoyment: and so it is; but frequently, alas, too frequently, it becomes a source of sorrows and miseries, that spread a baneful gloom over all the remaining years of existence. Almost every thing around the young conspires to their seduction. The world displays its charms before them; and with its perfidy they are yet unacquainted. Criminal pleasures put forth a show of alluring blossoms on every side. Their imagination opens before them a wide extent of years, in which they expect to find both time for enjoying the pleasures of vice, and time for prudence and repentance. Worldlings flatter and inflame their passions. The conversation of libertines and infidels, impious publications, seductive examples, and the powers of hell combine to accelerate their destruction. For a youth to stand firm against the assaults of enemies so numerous and so formidable, the fear of God must have taken possession of his whole soul; he must have conceived a rooted detestation of vice; the maxims of religion must have sunk deeply into his heart; he must have been habituated to moderation and self-government, and accustomed to view every sensual pleasure, however innocent, with a certain fear of the danger that may lurk behind it. Even with all these predispositions to goodness, he will find it exceedingly difficult to preserve his innocence untainted; and you, parents, who have yourselves passed through the fiery trial of youth, can vouch for this. But what, then, must become of a child who is brought up in a family where there is little of Christianity but the name? What must become of a child who is abandoned by its parents to all the vain and vicious pursuits to which the world will not fail to invite it? What hopes can be entertained of a boy whose chief education is drawn from the example of a profane, intemperate, debauched, passionate, or covetous father? How melancholy a prospect is opened before the girl, in whose tender mind scarce any other desires are excited, but to please in company, and play off the arts of captivation? a girl, whose inborn vanity is nourished by fulsome adulation and gaudy decorations, and whose weak heart is neither guarded by the vigilance nor supported by the virtuous

example of a Christian mother? Will she long hold out against the power of her own passions, and that of the passions of others? No! my brethren, a child without religious education is in the condition of a vessel without a pilot, given up to the mercy of the waves, on a tempestuous ocean, and soon, very soon, must suffer shipwreck. Little hope, indeed, can be entertained of any human being, whose natural inclinations to evil have not been counteracted by the advantages of parental instructions. In all probability, the sins of his youth will prepare him for every enormity in more advanced age. Iniquity will grow up with his growth, will infect every stage of his existence. Iniquity, to use the language of inspiration, will penetrate into the very marrow of his bones, will descend with him into the grave, and continue to be his torment for endless ages.

But, it is time to reverse the picture. Like the earth of which we are formed, if left without proper culture, we can produce nothing but weeds, and tares, and noxious plants. But, as the earth, if properly cultivated, may be highly improved and fertilized; so, if the minds of the young be fenced early with the fear of God and the great truths of eternity, if their innate depravity be corrected, and the seeds of virtue sown in their souls, there is no flower, no fruit of virtue, but what, with the help of God, they are capable of producing. *Train up a child according to his way*, says the wise man, *and even when he is old he will not depart from it.* When, from the first dawn of reason, he is accustomed never to hear a vicious action spoken of, but as an object of horror, never to hear his parents pronounce the name of God, without showing sentiments of adoration, praise, and love; when, from the first dawn of reason, he is accustomed to have sensual pleasures described to him as ever beset with lurking perils, and to have religion presented as the amiable guardian of his present and future felicity; can it be supposed possible, that virtue should not gain the ascendant in his mind? No, Christian parent, if you be but indefatigable in your endeavors; if you watch, without ceasing, over the rising inclinations of your children; if you prune their excrescences with a prudent hand; if you improve the numberless opportunities which constant intercourse with your children in their tender years offers to you, and to you alone, to instil into their

minds virtuous dispositions and inculcate well-adapted instructions; and if, to all your exertions, you join fervent prayer to the throne of God for the sanctification of your dear charge,—fear not, but the graces of heaven will water the tender plants, and, in return for your obedience, his fostering care will tend, cherish, support, and fence them against all that is destructive or contagious.

But you will, perhaps, say, "Though it be true, that our children may be governed in their early years, yet, as they grow up, they become gradually emancipated from our dominion, and then they enter on paths so slippery, and are surrounded by such temptations, that all the sanguine hopes, which their well-formed minds had excited, may vanish in an instant." A mournful, but an evident truth, which, far from denying or suppressing, I would often declare and inculcate, because it greatly confirms my argument. For, if, after the most Christian education, there be still much to be apprehended, what glimmering of hope can remain, if that education be neglected? Besides, parents should consider, that he, who has been early habituated to the exercises and intimately penetrated with the truths of religion, will hardly ever be so subdued by temptation, as to be drawn into any grievous crime, without many a previous struggle. When a man, who from his infancy has been trained up in virtue, is first invited to taste an unlawful enjoyment, he feels his soul recoil at the criminal suggestion: as the temptation increases in strength, he hesitates,—he fluctuates,—advances towards the object,—returns again,—consents,—retracts his consent,—and, if he commit the crime, he sins with misgiving and trembling, reproaching himself with his perfidiousness, and blushing at his baseness. When the short-lived pleasure has expired, conscience again raises her voice: he hears her plaintive cries, so importuning, so troublesome, so terrible to the criminal: and grief wrings his soul. Looking back, from time to time, on the serene days of innocence, "Alas!" he cries out, "who will grant me, that I may be as in the time of my youth, when the Lord was with me! The Lord was my light and my salvation; the Lord was the protector of my life. Then I had no shame; then I was without fear; my heart was innocent, my heart was calm and happy." My brethren, if he

but suffer these sentiments to labor in his breast, and do not overpower them by running into dissipation, and plunging into excess, we may be confident that it will not be long, before, melting with compunction, he will present himself at the tribunal of penance, that, delivering his soul from the oppressive load of guilt, he may recover the sweet serenity which he had lost by his folly. These reflections should afford much consolation to those parents, who, after having bestowed every care on their children's education, have still the affliction to see them engaged in vice. Let them indulge the pleasing hope, that the strayed sheep will be brought back to the fold; that the prodigal will return, will embrace the knees of his afflicted parent, and bathe them with penitential tears. Your unhappy child seems at present to have forgotten all your admonitions: but there is great reason to trust, that the truths impressed upon his mind, break in, not unfrequently, upon his criminal enjoyments: that, to scenes of licentious gayety, he often carries with him a wounded heart, and that ere long some serious disease, some misfortune, or some disgust will rekindle the sparks of goodness, which lie, not extinguished, but only smothered, in his heart. If the worst come to the worst; if an unaccountable perversity of disposition should bid defiance to the united efforts of conscience, of education, and of grace, still, your hands will be innocent of his blood. His punishment, as his guilt, will be entirely his own. You, at least, will not partake of either. But, which is infinitely more probable, if remorse produce its natural effect, and the sweet attractions of virtue at length recall the wanderer from the errors of his way, what comfort will his return bring to your sorrowing hearts? how quickly will your tears be turned into joy, and how for ever will you congratulate yourselves, on having given your child that Christian education, without which he must have been lost eternally! And if, which is by far the most probable of all, guided by the counsels of wisdom, which you inculcated into their tender minds, your children have constantly steered their course with prudence and virtue through the perilous voyages of early life, what unutterable pleasures must thrill your breasts, when you reflect, that to you and to your parental instructions this invaluable blessing is to be attributed. Then you will feel the full truth of that declaration

of Solomon: *Instruct thy son, and he shall refresh thee, and shall give delight to thy soul.* Then you will not only be secure of the dutiful and grateful behaviour of your children to yourselves, but you will have the pleasure of seeing them grow up, in their different stations, to prospects of usefulness in the world. Should Providence spare you to the advance of age, they will be a comfort and honor to your declining years. You will enjoy a second youth in their vigor and usefulness, and a sense of their piety will be a cheering cordial to your souls in your dying moments. A delightful thought will it indeed be: "I am going to take my leave of the world, and my scene of service is over; but I leave those behind me, who will labor for God in my stead, and act, perhaps, with greater fidelity and zeal, for the support of religion in a degenerate age. I leave my dear children, destitute indeed of my counsel and help, but I leave them under the guardian care of my Father and their Father, of my God and their God. I must be separated from them, and the distance between us must soon be as great as between earth and heaven. But, as I leave them under the best guidance in the wilderness, so I have a joyful persuasion that they will soon follow me into the celestial Canaan. Yet a little while, and I and my dear offspring shall appear together before the throne of God, and I shall stand forth with transport, and say: 'Behold here am I, and the children, whom thou hast graciously given me.' Then will the happiness, on which I now enter, be multiplied upon me, by the sight of every child that has a share in it." Such will be your consolations through life; such and so pleasant your reflections on the bed of death, if, by duly instructing your children, you co-operate with the will of God, and prepare them for that heaven which they were created to enjoy.

But, if you omit this all-necessary duty,—when, in consequence of this omission, you see those, whose infant days gave you so many tender pleasures and so many fond hopes, deviating from the paths of duty and happiness,—how deeply will it pierce you! To your children you are all inclined to look for comfort under the labors and the sorrows which advanced years will bring upon you. But, alas, my brethren, if you neglect their instruction, these are they who will increase your labors and aggravate your sorrows, who will hasten upon you the in-

firmities of age, or crush you faster under the weight of them, till they have brought down your hoary hairs with anguish to the grave. Little do you think how much agony and distress you will endure; how many deluded hopes, how many anxious days, how many restless nights will concur to make the decline of life gloomy. And in your last moments, the thought that your misery and your children's ruin are chargeable upon your own omission, will be a dreadful ingredient in the bitter cup which you must then drain. I am fully persuaded, that, if you knew how these things distress your mind at the hour of death, you would not suffer every trifling difficulty to deter you from the discharge of those duties to your children, on which not only their temporal and eternal lot, but also your own destiny in this world and in the next, may be truly said to depend.

If you are not yet fully sensible of this, let me transport you, in imagination, to the concluding scene of this world's tragedy. Startled by the archangel's trumpet from the momentary dream of death, conceive yourselves stationed before the tribunal of the Omnipotent, and gazing with the dumbness of mortal alarm on the new scenes developed before you; the earth consumed, heaven above, hell below, time past, eternity begun, Satan to accuse, and God to judge. I need not pass through all the parts of the rigorous examination which you must now undergo: indeed language and ideas would fail me in the attempt; for God alone can fathom the depths of man's depravity, as God alone can comprehend the severity of his own inscrutable judgments. I will only ask, is there one whose share of personal sins is so small, that he would wish to have the sins of others to answer for? Will Satan, and his own conscience, and his omniscient Judge be able to produce from his own life so little against him, that he would undertake to bear the burden of others' transgressions? Oh! if you have ever compared your performances to your obligations, if ever you have balanced the rigid, the uncompromising precepts of the gospel against the fluctuating tenor of your conduct, you will each acknowledge that the catalogue of your own offences is itself too numerous, and that the prospect of being made responsible for the crimes of others would at once plunge you into despair. Ah, why, then, will so many of you persist in a line of conduct which inevitably

leads to this dilemma? If you continue in this cruel negligence of the souls of your children, how, parents, how will you face them at this final meeting? How will you be able to answer the great Father of spirits, when expostulating with you, on account of his offspring, as well as yours, who have been betrayed and ruined by your neglect? "Inhuman creatures," may he justly say, "to your care did my providence commit these immortal souls, whom my omnipotence created. From you, by my appointment, they derived their being. I implanted in your hearts the natural affections of parents towards them. And, to furnish you with every opportunity for discharging your obligation, in your arms and under your eyes did I cause them to pass through the tender scenes of infancy and childhood. Yet, how did you fulfil the trust reposed in you? Behold the book of my remembrance, the records of your lives! Where is the memorial of one hour spent in holy instruction or in fervent prayer with them or for them? Can I approve, can I acquit you on such a review? or shall I not rather visit for these things, and *shall not my soul be avenged* for such neglect as this?"

And your children, my brethren, will they be silent? Did Adam, when upbraided by his God for having eaten the forbidden fruit, attempt to lay all the blame on his consort Eve, who had so lately been taken from his side, and still appeared lovely in her sorrow, and will your children, in that terrible day, spare you? You may rather expect, they will labor to the utmost to aggravate a crime which cost them so dear; that so they may, if possible, alleviate their own guilt, or, if not, indulge revenge. "O God!" may they perhaps then cry out, in piercing accents of indignation and despair, "thou art righteous in the sentence which thou passest upon us, and we justly die for our iniquity! But wilt thou not remember, that our ruin is, in great part, chargeable on these our parents? Had they been faithful to thee and to us, it had perhaps been prevented. Had our infancy been formed by religious instruction, we might not have grown up to wickedness, we might not in the advance of life have contemned thy laws and trampled on the blood of thy Son, but might, this day, have been owned by thee as thy children, and have risen to that inheritance of light and glory, which we now behold at so unapproachable a distance. Oh,

cursed be the fathers that begat us! cursed be the womb that bore us! cursed the paps that gave us suck! Remember us, O Lord, while thou art judging them, and let us have this one wretched comfort, in the midst of all our agonies, that it is not with impunity they have betrayed our souls."

This is, indeed, shocking and diabolical language, and for that very reason, it is so much the more probable, on this dreadful occasion. And, give me leave to ask, if your children were thus crying out against you, in the bitterness of their souls, could you attempt to purchase their silence, by reminding them of the care which you took of their temporal affairs, and of the flourishing state in which you left them upon earth? Nay, could you have the heart so much as to mention such a trifle? If not, then, in the name of reason, how can you remain satisfied, while you confine all your thoughts and labors to that which will neither secure your children from final destruction, nor excuse you from being made their companions in endless torments? There is yet, my brethren, another motive, which I think I should do wrong entirely to suppress. If, indeed, those which have been already urged must fail of effect, I cannot hope for any success from the remark: still I must observe, that the honor of God and the interest of religion are greatly concerned in your care of the education of your children. We live in a dying world. Our fathers, where are they? sleeping in the dust, as we must shortly be. In a very little time, these places must know us no more. And when you are mouldering in the house of silence, who will fill your places in the house of God? Who will rise up in your stead, for the support of religion in the succeeding generation? From whom can it be expected, but from your children? yet how can you expect it from them, if you neglect the only sure means of rendering them zealous for their religion and faithful to their God? I know that the kingdom of Christ shall stand as long as the sun and the moon endure; I know that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church. But, whether true religion shall continue to flourish, or even to exist, in this island, I know not. If you are desirous that it should; if you have any love for your country; if you feel any anxiety that England may escape the fate of Pergamus, of Thyatira, and of so many Asian provinces, where Mohammedanism now sits enthroned on

the ruins of Christian altars and Christian temples, show that anxiety by your diligence in the momentous charge of training up your children in the way in which they should go.

I beg, my brethren, you will bear in mind this whole train of argument, while I employ the short remnant of my time in giving those directions which I promised at the commencement. First, then, your labors for the instruction of your children must begin even in their infancy. The soul of a child, as well as its body, has its growing faculties, and its future habits will depend chiefly on the manner in which those faculties are cultivated and directed. Should you wait till years of more maturity, before you begin to form its morals, it will be much too late, and you never may be able to regain the time which you have lost. Therefore, as soon as the infant's mind shall have become susceptible of information, impress on it a deep sense of religion, which is the only sure preserver of the purity of our morals, the brightest ornament of our nature, and the greatest comfort of our existence. Be careful not to lose these precious moments, while the heart is yet innocent, and the graces of baptism, in all their purity and vigor, prepare the soul for receiving the first seeds of virtue. Hasten, in those moments, to paint to them, with the most lively coloring, the infinite majesty and transcendent perfections of the Supreme Being; his wisdom, goodness, power, glory, and sovereign dominion. As soon as their organs of speech are capable of forming an articulate sound, teach them, by frequent and patient repetitions, the most approved and authorized forms of prayer, such as the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Belief. Yet, be not content with their learning these forms by rote, but carefully inculcate their sublime meaning, that so they may not run through them as lessons or tasks, but may feel the weight and know the importance of what they are saying. And, when they are masters of the words, and have some idea of the import of their prayers, take care that, at least every morning and every evening, they seriously and devoutly repeat them, either before you, or with you. Set them the example of the strictest punctuality yourselves; and when you are prevented from joining in their devotions, still always ascertain that they are not omitted.

Having taught them their prayers, you must next, as soon

as their minds are sufficiently mature, instruct them in their catechism. Take care that they attend the public instructions given every Sunday in the chapel, and take care that they attend them with regularity. What can a child learn, who, being present two Sundays in the month, is, under one pretext or another, detained at home the remaining Sundays? By this interruption, the order of the explanations is broken, and the reasoning injured; and, consequently, the ideas implanted in his mind must be almost inextricably confused, and the impression made upon his heart proportionably faint. Yet, alas! of the thousands who frequent this chapel, how few send their children for instruction regularly! indeed, how few send them at all! It gives me no pleasure, my brethren, to reproach you; but the truth of the reproach may be witnessed, every Sunday afternoon, in the very small number of children who are brought to say their catechism: and where your eternal interests are at the stake, I had rather you should be startled at hearing these things from me now, than be tormented with hearing them hereafter from your inexorable judge. But, though it be of importance that your children should attend the public catechetical lectures, yet never forget that it is under your roofs, by your own firesides, in the retirement of your own homes, that the traces left in their minds are to be revived and more deeply imprinted. To you, more immediately than to the minister of religion, is intrusted the care, not only of the bodies, but of the souls of your little ones. Examine well their proficiency, and, while you are explaining their catechism to them, dwell more largely on the parts which peculiarly concern them; bring home to their bosoms such truths as most intimately regard them; and show the necessity of their fulfilling those commandments of which they may already be capable. For instance, should the sacrament of Baptism be your subject, do not omit to tell them that they have received this sacrament, and, in it, that white robe of innocence, which Jesus Christ will demand of them, when seated on his throne of judgment. Animate them, rather to lose all things else than risk the loss of that; exhort them to preserve it unspotted, to the last moment of their lives. Tell them that, when they were clothed with it, they vowed to the Lord of heaven and earth eternal fidelity,

and that the blessed angels heard and recorded their solemn engagements. Exhort them to walk constantly in the way of his commandments, and to make virtue their principal care. Tell them, that all other things shall pass away, that only their virtues shall subsist eternally, a perennial spring of purest pleasures. Tell them, that, much as you love them, you would rather see them drop dead at your feet than forfeit the friendship of their good God.

When they have attained their seventh year, an age at which the mind is in general sufficiently open to be capable of mortal sin, diligently instruct them in every part of the sacrament of penance; and do not rest satisfied with their learning their duty; but see that they practise it. After having taught them what they have to do, and assisted them in their preparation, lead them, not once or twice, but punctually, to the confessional. There, they will be cautioned against the passions predominant in their breasts; there, they will be forewarned more seriously than elsewhere of the various dangers through which they must pass; there, they will receive information, which, both as to matter and manner, could not with equal propriety be in any other place communicated. Oh! how many thousands are there in the world, who, for want of that instruction and exhortation which the confessional would have afforded, have for years continued in practices pernicious to both body and soul: practices, which, notwithstanding the inclinations of corrupt nature, might have been easily checked in their commencement; but which acquired strength from indulgence, and, for want of early information, have either never been overcome, or have been conquered only after many a severe and doubtful conflict. *Blessed*, indeed, as the Scripture says, *is the man, who hath borne the yoke from his youth.*

Having been habituated to the humiliating but consoling and salutary rite of confession, your children will probably be fit, as soon as the powers of their minds are sufficiently expanded, to receive the holy sacrament of the body and blood of their Saviour. Spare no pains in impressing on them the importance of this step. Prepare them for it with the greatest assiduity, and remember, that they become bound by the precept of yearly communion, as soon as they are capable of understanding the

mystery, or, as St. Paul expresses it, of discerning the body of the Lord. Hence, the parent, who authorizes, or tolerates, their absence from communion, after they have attained the years of discretion, incurs the guilt of mortal sin; and if, by concealing this circumstance in his confession, he gains access to the communion, he commits a sacrilege. I speak plainly, my brethren, because I know this part of a parent's duty to be very much neglected.

In conclusion, I will say one word upon fasting. Young persons are not bound by the *ecclesiastical* law of fasting, till they have completed their twenty-first year. But, whoever considers the strength of the passions in youth, will readily see that the *natural* law, which obliges both old and young to take every precaution necessary for the preservation of their innocence, will frequently oblige them to weaken the rebellious powers of concupiscence, by fasts as rigorous as those commanded by the Church. As to days of abstinence, all are bound to observe them, who have passed their seventh year. Consequently, parents should never permit those who are seven years of age, to eat flesh meat upon days of abstinence, except in case of sickness, and then they should beforehand, if possible, ask and obtain a dispensation. Other parts of your duty to your children, I will, by the divine assistance, detail to you, on the following Sundays: and in the mean time, I beseech the Father of mercies, that you may enjoy the comforts promised by Solomon, when he said: *Instruct thy son, and he shall refresh thee, and shall give delight to thy soul.*

Sermon LXV.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

DUTIES OF PARENTS.

If the just man shall turn away from his justice, and shall commit iniquity,——because thou hast not given him warning; he shall die in his sin:—but I will require his blood at thy hand.—EZECHIEL iii. 20.

THESE terrible words, which are addressed by the Sovereign Judge to all who have charge over others, ought frequently to be a subject of meditation to parents. You, beyond all others, are strictly responsible for your children's conduct. Your salvation is attached to theirs. You shall not enter into the kingdom, unless you have labored to conduct them thither. At the last day, you will not be asked whether you left your children rich, whether you taught them the art of making their fortunes, or of rising to eminence in the world: but the great question will be, what has become of their souls? And if, through your fault, those immortal spirits, for which Christ died, have perished, in vain will you present at the bar of divine justice your own good works, your fervent prayers, your austerities, your abundant alms-deeds. All that might save a recluse; but it will not suffice for the salvation of a parent who has left his duty to his children undischarged. But this, and the many other motives which reason and religion suggest, to urge parents to be careful of the education of their children, I laid before you on a former occasion, and therefore shall now, in pursuance of my plan, proceed to offer some advice, regarding the manner in which you should attempt to infuse proper instructions into the minds of your children, and regarding the precautions necessary for rendering the attempt effectual. As

to the manner, you should teach them, *plainly, seriously, patiently.*

1. You should teach them *plainly.* They are to be taught the plainest truths of religion. You must feed them with milk, while they are babes, and reserve the strong meat for a maturer age. And, while you are teaching them the plainest things, endeavor to use the plainest words. This is the gracious method which God uses with us all. He speaks to us of heavenly things in language, not fully expressive of their sublimity and grandeur, but rather suited to our feeble apprehensions. Thus our Lord taught his disciples, employing easy and familiar similitudes, taken from the most obvious occurrences in life, to illustrate matters of the highest importance. Such condescension should you employ, in training up those committed to your care; and you should always examine whether you take their understandings along with you. Otherwise, you are speaking an unknown tongue, and, as the apostle expresses it, are barbarians unto them, however graceful or elegant your language may be in itself.

2. Children should be instructed in a very *serious* manner. There is an unhappy proneness in our degenerate nature to trifle with holy things; and to this fault the giddiness of childhood is peculiarly subject. Great caution should therefore be taken, lest you encourage so dangerous a propensity. Hence, parents should never laugh or seem pleased, when a child does or says any thing, though it be ever so witty, which bears the least tincture of irreligion. *Play with thy son,* says the Wise Man, *and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at last thy teeth be set on edge.* You must labor to impress upon your own hearts a deep sense of the truth and importance of what you say. This will give you an unaffected solemnity in speaking, which will command the attention and awe the hearts of your children. Endeavor to cherish in your own souls an habitual fear of the Lord of heaven and earth, that, when you talk of him to your little ones, they may see indications of the humblest veneration and reverence; and so may learn "to fear him from their youth." When you speak to them of their Saviour, let your souls be overflowing with love and gratitude, for the unutterable blessing of redemp-

tion; and when you remind them of death, judgment, and eternity, consider yourselves and them as dying creatures: think, in how few months, or weeks, or days, your lips may be silent in the dust, or they may be for ever removed beyond the reach of your instructions; and reason with them in as earnest and importunate a manner as if the salvation of their immortal souls depended on the effect of the present address.

3. Children should be instructed with much *patience*. You know, that when the husbandman has committed his seed to the ground, he does not expect immediately to see his field waving with a ripe and luxuriant crop. He must patiently permit nature to carry on her unseen operations, for a considerable time, before he can know whether his labor has not been thrown away; and it is not till after the lapse of months that he can hope to reap the reward of his industry. Thus, my brethren, when you are cultivating the minds of your children, you must not imagine that a plentiful harvest will spring up in a day. The growth of their bodies is slow, and proceeds by insensible degrees; and you are not to wonder if their advancement in knowledge and virtue be still slower, still less perceptible. Be upon your guard, therefore, against fretfulness and impatience. Your children will forget what you have once inculcated; repeat it a second time: and, if they forget it the second time, repeat it the third. It is thus that our Father who is in heaven deals with us all, and we have daily reasons to rejoice, and to thank him for his patience and condescension; for that remorse which he causes constantly to pursue us, when we have committed an evil action, and for those secret inspirations and calls to virtue, by which, at all times and in all places, he speaks to our hearts. This divine conduct you should emulate, striving to be patient, even as your heavenly Father is patient. Not content with repeating your instructions to your children at stated times during the week, and more particularly on the Sunday, you should, every day, and often in the day, by occasional hints, and seasonable allusions, try to revive the impressions which your more formal admonitions may have made upon their minds. These random and transient hints, which the parent may forget in a few moments, will often be distinctly remembered by the child for many years, because they happen to strike his fancy.

The lucky moments when an effect may be produced on a child's mind can seldom be either foreseen or ascertained: hence, you should not be sparing of these sudden strokes. If one does not prosper, another may. *In the morning*, says Solomon, *sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not whether thou shalt prosper, or whether both shall be alike good.*

Thus let your children be instructed *plainly*, *seriously*, and *patiently*. I waive some other particulars which I might have added to these; because they will more properly fall under the second branch of these directions, where I am to explain the precautions which you must take, if you desire these attempts to be successful.

And first, if you wish to be attended to, you must keep up your authority over your children. As soon as their passions begin to show themselves, whatever may be their importunity or fretfulness, allow them no gratifications but such as you know to be reasonable. The first tears of infants are so many pathetic and eloquent petitions for succor. But they soon shed tears of humor and caprice: and if you hush their cries by always bending to their whims and yielding to their impatient inclinations, their tears will soon become positive commands; and your indulgence will only serve to strengthen the power of passion, and diminish that of reason in their souls. The obstinacy which makes them shed so many tears in their infancy, if you are weak enough to give way to it, may make them insupportable, both to others and to themselves, all through their lives. To persuade fond parents that they injure their children by a too easy compliance with their humors, is, I am well aware, a most difficult undertaking. However, I will lay before you some symptoms of the evil, and leave each to judge for himself. Are you so averse from seeing your children's faults, as to conceive a disgust for those who point them out? Does the fear of causing pain to your children hold back your hands from giving them due correction? Do you generally bear with their faults, under pretence that it will be time enough to reform them hereafter? Do you permit them to be disorderly in their behaviour to others? He whose conscience answers these questions affirmatively, may safely conclude that his affection for his

offspring is inordinate, and operates in a way which will prove detrimental, if not ruinous, to their virtue.

I just now alluded to correction. On this important part of education I must make a few remarks. Correction supposes that a child has adopted some wrong notions, or contracted some bad habits; and it consists of two parts. The first is, to point out what is wrong in the notions adopted, and, by contrasting it with the opposite truth, to convince the judgment, and lead the young mind to correct itself. The second is, to break the force of bad habits, which may often be done in the same manner; that is, by showing wherein they are wrong, and inducing the young mind to renounce and forsake them. But, when this method fails, when the child sees what is right, and persists in doing wrong, to bend such obstinacy, chastisement is required; and he who in such a case withholds it destroys his own child, according to that of Solomon: *He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him, correcteth him betimes. Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, and the rod of correction shall drive it away. Withhold not correction from a child; for, if thou strike him with a rod, he shall not die. Correct thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee.* Many are the examples which the Scripture itself furnishes to enforce these maxims. I will mention only that of Heli, who, though himself a faithful servant of the God of Israel, yet, by a fatal want of severity, brought utter ruin both on himself and his descendants. He reproved the wickedness of his sons, but did not make use of those harsher means which the authority of a parent not only warranted but required. *Therefore, saith the Lord, I will judge his house for ever for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly, and did not chastise them. Therefore have I sworn to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated with victims nor offerings for ever.*

Beware, my brethren, lest you merit a similar curse. And here let me particularly caution you against allowing the arms of one parent to be a refuge to the children from the just resent-

ment of the other. Both father and mother should appear to act in concert, or the authority of the one will be despised, and probably the indulgence of the other abused, and the mutual affection of both endangered.

I cannot dismiss this subject without one or two cautions. Take heed, in the first place, that your corrections be neither too frequent nor too severe. If your corrections be too frequent, they will not be effectual. Your children, like iron, will harden under repeated strokes; and that ingenuous shame which adds the keenest sting to what they suffer from a parent's hand, will be gradually worn away. If your corrections be too severe, this farther inconvenience will arise, that there will not be a due difference made between great and small faults. And it is of high importance to let your children see that you know how to distinguish between indiscretion and wickedness. You should yourselves appear most displeased when you have reason to believe that God is offended. There always will be in children many faults, the necessary effects of childishness, which do not spring from any malice of heart, and which will gradually leave them as they come to maturer years. *When I was a child*, says St. Paul, *I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away the things of a child.* Things of this kind must be often overlooked in children, and it would be great folly in parents to be always chiding and chastising them for such failings; but, if the fault be immoral, or show a vicious disposition, such as telling untruths, speaking improper words, disobedience, or stubbornness, it is certainly the greatest cruelty to overlook such things. And it is a pernicious mistake to imagine that dispositions of this kind will leave the children as they grow up. On the contrary, such is the unhappy corruption of the heart of man, that these first buds of vice will grow stronger and stronger by indulgence. But, then, in the second place, I must caution you against giving this correction while in a passion. Chastisement should be regarded as an act of domestic justice, and therefore should be administered with due decorum; and to behave otherwise is almost as great an indecency as for a judge to pass sentence in anger. It is injurious to yourselves; for peevishness and passion will grow upon you by being indulged against those who

dare not oppose them. It is also injurious to your children. Chastisement, when mixed with rage and intemperate passion, defeats its own purpose. It may lead a child to dissemble, but it does not tend to affect his heart. On the contrary, it leaves a spirit of mutiny and discontent within him. It may force him to counterfeit a change; but it will not readily induce him to reflect calmly upon his conduct, which is the first step to real reformation. If your children see that you act calmly and mildly; if they read parental tenderness in your heart, though the brow may be wrinkled to a frown; if they perceive that correction is a strange work to you, a violence which you offer to yourselves from a principle of duty to God and affection to them, they must be obdurate indeed if they do not receive it with reverence and love. But, if once they imagine that you chastise them merely to vent your passion and gratify your resentment, they will secretly despise, and perhaps hate you for it. In that instance, at least, they will look upon you as their enemies, and may, by a continued course of such treatment, contract an aversion to you and to all that you recommend to them. Thus, you may lose your influence by the very means which you employ to support it. Yet, alas, how many such parents are there! how many, whose temper being restrained when they are abroad by the decorums of society, continually bursts forth and vents all its ill-humors at home! Parents, whose complaints are bitter reproaches, whose counsels are violent invectives, whose orders are cruel menaces, who have no indulgence for the levity, the thoughtlessness, and the little sallies so natural to youth; who make no allowance for the want of judgment and experience; whom no prayers can soften, no tears disarm; who make their house the abode of mourning and desolation, where their children cannot look them in the face without being petrified with terror. Oh! such conduct is brutal and execrable. Such parents might learn a useful lesson from the wild beasts of the desert. Correct your children when necessary; but, as much as possible, make it evident to them that you have nothing in view but their advantage. Reprove them; but do it with kindness and sweetness. Gain their affections by fond endearments: make yourselves masters of their heart, that so you may give it to Jesus Christ. Secure it to

yourselves by kindness, that you may secure it to the service and to the enjoyment of its Sovereign Good.

Hence, you should be careful to let your children see that you do not wish to terrify and alarm them, to load them with unnecessary severities, or deprive them of any innocent pleasures; that what you say, in your instructions to them, is not dictated by an ostentation of your own wisdom and authority, but proceeds from an earnest desire of their happiness. Study, therefore, to address them in the most endearing language, as well as with the softest and sweetest arguments. In order to this, endeavor to look upon your children in such light as may be most likely to awaken these tender sentiments. Consider them as creatures whom you have brought into being, tainted with innate corruption, surrounded with snares, and in danger so imminent, that, if not snatched as brands out of the furnace, they must perish for ever. If you be sincerely animated with such sentiments of love towards them, you may be sure they will tenderly love you in return; and as our Lord observes, that if any man love him, he will keep his commandments; so, without doubt, the more your children love you, the more will they regard your admonitions. The human mind is not like timber or stone, which we may force to take any shape or figure. It is of an active nature, and must always have an active and immediate share in acquiring either knowledge or virtue. Hence the necessity of taking the inclinations and willing application of a child along with you in your endeavors to educate him aright; and hence the necessity of such treatment as tends to gain his heart. When his heart is gained, he soon makes extraordinary progress, and the wise parent enjoys an ample reward in the speedy improvement of his offspring. Another effect, equally desirable, will follow from this tender and endearing behaviour to your children. Seeing that, far from taking any delight in crossing them, you study their inclinations, and have their welfare sincerely at heart, they will soon learn quietly to refer themselves to your care, willingly comply with your commands, and easily submit to mortifications and denials when you judge them necessary. Besides, they will love your company and delight to be in it; and this will furnish you with innumerable opportunities of forming their minds,

and, at the same time, will preserve them from innumerable dangers.

This, my brethren, reminds me of another important point. If you wish to see your care for the education of your family successful, you must be solicitous to keep them out of the way of temptation. Let no bad or dangerous books be placed within their reach: allow them to frequent no diversions where their innocence may be ruined, or the tenderness of their conscience impaired. At the same time, endeavor to find out suitable company for them, and make your own company as pleasing to them as you can. Indulge them in such diversions as duty and prudence will permit; for too rigorous a restraint would make them eager to pursue amusement, wherever it is to be found. And if you see that they are beginning to form an acquaintance with those whom you deem likely to ensnare and corrupt them, first kindly warn them of the danger, and try by gentle means to draw them from it. If these prove ineffectual, reason with them more largely on the point; explain to them the many perils to which they will be exposed; and show them the examples of others who have been injured and ruined by such society. If all this be not enough, interpose the authority which God has given you, absolutely forbid them the place and company, and let them see by your conduct that you are in good earnest in the prohibition. One resolute step of this kind might have prevented the ruin of multitudes who have fallen victims to the importunities of vicious companions and the weak indulgence of unwise parents, who, like Heli, have contented themselves with blaming what they ought strenuously to have redressed.

But, if all bad company be formidable, that is the most to be dreaded which may be found at home. Great care ought therefore to be taken, that you admit none into your families who may debauch the tender minds of your little ones by pernicious opinions or by vicious practices. It is a thousand times better to put up with some inconveniences and disadvantages, when you have reason to believe that a servant fears God, and will be faithful in watching over your children, and seconding your care in their education, than to prefer those who, while they manage your affairs something better, may pervert your offspring to the service of the devil. Permit me to add, that if you would

not have all your labor lost, you must be very cautious with regard to the settlement of your children in the world. Apprenticeships and marriages in irreligious families are the sources of innumerable evils.

After all, these means and these precautions will be quite useless, unless seconded by the force of your own example. The almost constant employment of infancy is imitation. Children borrow their ideas and propensities, as well as their words and gestures, from those by whom they are surrounded. Nature prompts them to look up to you, as their particular models. On you they fix their curious eyes: with you they converse: with you they live. Let, then, your piety diffuse itself into their souls and root itself into their hearts. Let it be impossible for them to see, in your conduct or in your management of them, any thing, which has the appearance of deceit, or deviates from the line of strict propriety. Let the first words which they hear be words of salvation. As soon as their tongue begins to lisp its almost inarticulate sounds, let them learn, from what they observe in you, to call on the Father of mercies, to bless and praise their great Creator. Let them see your instructions reduced to practice, and have the living image of your maxims before their eyes, in your own lives. Let them see you upright and just in your dealings, cheerful and gay without obscenity or detraction, modest, affable, and humble in your demeanor, loving each other, and walking hand in hand to heaven, in domestic harmony;—and they will feel the love of virtue enkindled in their souls, and will endeavor to practise what they behold so lovely in their parents. If, instead of this, you place iniquity before their eyes, you plant it in their souls. Remember here, that, unless you be really virtuous, vain will be all your endeavors to hide your irregularities. Children have an attentive, piercing eye, which few things escape. When you violate the law of God, they claim a right to do the same themselves; and you, in some sense, lose your right to forbid them. In such a case, it will be of little use to give them good advice. Children, says a lively writer, are much more influenced by what they see, than by what they hear. From your words, they will appeal to your actions, and when you reprove them, will give a sarcastic look, that would say, which of us deserves most

to be blamed. But, my brethren, if our blessed Lord declares wo to that man by whom scandal cometh; if he assures us that it were better for him *that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea*, how aggravated must be the guilt, and how severe the punishment, of those parents who scandalize the little ones of whom they have received so special a charge, and whom they are so strictly bound to rear up in innocence and in sanctification.

Before concluding, I must not omit another essential point. Closely watch and study the temper of each of your children. They will probably differ in disposition, as much as they differ in feature; and, as all kinds of meat and medicine are not proper for each, so neither is the same treatment. Some are easily moved by words, others by example. Some are of a dull and heavy temper, that needs stimulants; others, of a fiery disposition, require to be curbed. Some never regard a private reproof, and yet are easily corrected, if censured in public: others cannot bear a public disgrace, but in consequence of it grow morose and implacable, while they will hearken to a secret admonition, and repay the parent with amendment of life. Some are to be closely watched and observed; the least of their faults should not pass unnoticed. In others, it is better to wink at some slight improprieties, lest, by correcting too frequently, you make them bolder in transgression. To some you must put on an angry countenance, and seem to treat them as incorrigible. Others must be governed with uniform meekness and leniency. Some must be always conquered and never yielded to; to others it will be well occasionally to give way a little. While, therefore, your design is always the same, your methods must vary, according to the different tempers and inclinations of your children. And nothing can be more evident, than that, before you can adapt your treatment to the peculiar disposition of each child, you must have acquired an accurate knowledge of his character.

In the midst of all your solicitude and exertions, my brethren, never forget, that Paul may plant, and Apollo water, but it is *God that giveth the increase*, and, *unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.* Hence, it is the duty of parents to draw down the blessing of God upon their labors,

by fervent and persevering prayer. You ought daily to offer up your children to God, and beg of him to preserve those souls which he bought at so dear a rate. You ought with all your fervor to beg of him to bless your endeavors, and to pour out his spirit on your seed, and his blessing on your offspring, that they may grow up before him, as willows by the watercourses, that they may be a comfort to their parents, a support to the Church, and a name and a praise to their God.

Sermon LV.

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost.

DUTIES OF PARENTS.

Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to him: yea Lord, thou knowest that I love thee. He saith to him: feed my lambs.—JOHN xxi. 15.

THE prophet Isaias says of the great Shepherd of the Christian Church, *He shall gather together the lambs with his arm, and take them up in his bosom:* a prophecy abundantly fulfilled by the tender care, which our Redeemer expressed for the weakest of his disciples, and beautifully illustrated by the endearing condescension with which he embraced and blessed little infants. *Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.* It is also observable, that, when he appointed St. Peter to be the chief pastor of his Church, and committed to his care the whole of his flock, he directed the apostle's attention particularly to the young and the tender, saying, not only *feed my sheep*, but also and even in the first place, *feed my lambs*,—to intimate that the pastor of souls should by no means confine his exertions to those of a maturer age, but should extend a considerable portion of his solicitude to the rising generation.

My brethren, on these remarks I rest my apology, for soliciting a continuance of your indulgent attention, while I give some concluding instructions, to direct you in the proper education of your children. I have already stated, at full, the motives which urge you to the performance of this duty; I have shown you the manner in which you should proceed; I have pointed out the various duties of the young, as Catholics, and have told

you how to secure the cheerful execution of these duties. I have yet to enumerate the particular virtues which you should be most careful to cherish in the minds of your offspring.

Of these, piety to God is undoubtedly the most essential; but, as I have already touched upon this point, I will only add to what has been said, that, in representing to your children the awful perfections of their Creator, his majesty, his justice, and his power, you should never fail to describe him as not only the greatest, but the best of beings. You should represent him as the universal, kind, indulgent parent, who loves his creatures, and by all proper methods provides for their happiness. You should especially enlarge upon the goodness which he has shown to them; with what more than parental tenderness he watched round their cradles; with what compassion he heard their feeble cries, before their infant thoughts could form themselves into prayer. You should tell them, that they depend every moment on God, that all your affection for them is no more than he infuses into your hearts, and all your power to help them no more than he lodges in your hands: and this you should do, in order to engage them to approach to him without apprehension, but with the liveliest confidence in his mercies. With the same view, after having taught them that the first parents of the human race most ungratefully rebelled against God, and subjected themselves and all their offspring to his wrath, when you tell them of the deliverance from this dreadful state, which Jesus Christ purchased for us with his own blood, take great care not to fill their minds with an aversion to one sacred person, while you endeavor to attract their regard to another. The Father is not to be represented as severe and inexorable, hardly prevailed upon, by the intercession of his compassionate Son, to entertain thoughts of mercy. Far from that, you should speak of him as the overflowing fountain of goodness, whose eye pitied us in our helpless distress; whose almighty arm was stretched out for our rescue; whose eternal counsels of wisdom and love formed that important scheme to which we owe all our hopes. Often repeat to them, that God is so holy and yet so gracious, that, rather than destroy man on the one hand, or leave sin unpunished on the other, he gave his own Son a sacrifice for us, appointing him to die, that we

might live. You should, at the same time, represent to them, with holy wonder and joy, how readily the Son of God consented to procure our salvation in so expensive a way; how cheerfully he said: *Behold I come. O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.* To enhance the value of this amazing love, you should endeavor to teach them who this compassionate Redeemer is; to represent something of his glories, as the eternal Son of God and the great Lord of angels and men. You should enlarge upon his amazing condescension, in laying aside these glories, that he might become a helpless child, and afterwards a man of sorrows. Through the different scenes of his life, which are the most likely to strike their minds, you should lead them on to his death. You should show how patiently he submitted to the most cruel wrongs, to be scourged and spit upon, to be crowned with thorns, and to bear his cross; how he was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and how, when they had pierced his hands and his feet, instead of loading them with curses, he prayed for them, saying: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* And when their tender hearts are awed and melted with so strange a story, you should tell them, it was for them that thus he groaned, and bled, and died.

Tell them, moreover, that this Saviour, who redeemed the world by his death, also enlightened it by his doctrine. Instruct them to distinguish from the various sects, which bear the Christian name, that holy Church which alone has maintained this doctrine in its purity and entireness. Show them the sacred deposit of faith, preserved in that society of Christians from which all others have departed, and handed down in an uninterrupted succession during eigthteen hundred years. Ground them well in the motives for an unreserved obedience to the decisions of the infallible Church, under its visible head on earth, the vicar of Jesus Christ, who hath promised that his divine spirit shall abide with it, and teach it all truth to the end of the world. By thus showing them that what you teach is not merely the dictate of your own judgment, but rests upon the authoritative testimony of the Church of all ages and all nations, you will throw a dignified and venerable air over your instructions, and thus you will lay the only secure foundation for true faith and solid piety. At the same time, you should

try to raise up around this all-important principle a strong fence of kindred virtues.

Among these, obedience claims no small part of your attention. Children should be early convinced that God has committed them into the hands of their parents, and consequently that reverence and obedience to their parents is a part of the duty which they owe to God, and that disobedience to them is rebellion against him. This may be done with great advantage when you are explaining to them the fourth commandment: a command sufficiently clear to be understood by the weakest capacity, and having annexed to it the promise of a blessing which to most young people is an object of ardent, but doubtful desire.

Again, children should be trained up in the practice of benevolence and kindness to all. There is no instruction, relating to their duty in this respect, more happily adapted to the capacity of the young than that golden law, *Whatsoever you would that others should do unto you, that do also unto them.* That your exhortations to universal benevolence may be welcome to them, you should guard against every thing that tends to harden the heart. Remove from them all cruel and bloody spectacles; discourage any thing barbarous in their treatment of brute creatures, even the most insignificant and useless; and by no means allow them to sport themselves in the death or pain of domestic animals, which is one of the worst signs of a savage and malignant disposition. *The good man*, says Solomon, *hath mercy on his beast, but the bowels of the wicked are cruel.* Teach them the odiousness and folly of a selfish temper, and encourage them in a willingness to impart to others what is agreeable or entertaining to themselves; especially endeavor to form them to sentiments of compassion for the poor. With this view, it is a pleasing and improving practice occasionally to make your children the messengers by whom you send some small supply to the distressed: and if they show a disposition to give something out of the little stock which you allow them to call their own, you should joyfully cherish it, and should take care that they never lose by their charity; but, in a prudent manner, should abundantly repay it. It is hardly to be imagined that children thus brought up should, in after life,

prove injurious and oppressive: I will add that such will seldom be allowed by Providence to suffer want.

Again, if you have any regard to the welfare either of the souls or the bodies of your children, bring them up in the habit of diligence and attention. In whatever station of life they may at length be fixed, there is little prospect of their acquitting themselves with usefulness, honor, and advantage, without a close and resolute application; whereas the wisest of men has said, *Hast thou seen a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings.* An idle and undisciplined mind has been often compared to an uncultivated field, which, instead of plentifully producing things necessary or useful, wastes its prolific power in sending forth a variety of plants useless and noxious. The comparison is just. The mind of man is of an active nature: if that activity be not exerted on some proper pursuit, it will either waste itself in pursuing sometimes one trivial object and sometimes another, or it will break out into actions hurtful and vicious. Children, therefore, should be taught to love occupation, and led to a habit of persevering attention to whatever they are engaged in. If this be not done, a contrary habit will fix itself in the mind. Dissipation, restlessness, and an unfitness for labor will grow up with them, and disqualify them for any valuable attainment, and much more for the highest of all attainments,—piety and virtue.

Integrity is another virtue of very high importance in the education of children. It is melancholy to observe how soon the artifices and deceits of corrupt nature begin to show themselves. And on this account, very early care should be taken to form the minds of your little ones to a love of truth and candor, and a sense of the meanness, as well as the guilt, of a lie. Be careful not to expose them to any temptation of this kind, either by unreasonable severities on account of little faults, or by captious questions when inquiring into any matter of fact which it may seem their interest to disguise. And when you find them guilty of a known and deliberate untruth, express your horror of it, not only by instant reproof and correction, but by such conduct, for some time afterwards, as may plainly show them how greatly you are amazed, grieved, and displeased. And you ought not only thus severely to punish a direct lie, but

likewise, in a proper degree, to discourage all kinds of equivocations and double meanings, and those little tricks and artifices by which they may endeavor to impose upon you, or upon each other. Often show them how easy, how pleasant, how honorable, and how advantageous it is to maintain a fair, open, honest carriage: and, on the other hand, what folly there is in dishonesty, in all its shapes; and how certain it is, that by studying and practising it, they take the readiest way to make themselves noxious and useless, infamous and odious. Above all, frequently remind them, *that lying lips are an abomination to the Lord:* and that he expressly declares, *all liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*

Moreover, children should be trained up in the way of humility. The parent, who has any regard for the temporal ease and honor, or for the eternal happiness of his offspring, will take early means to check that pride which was the source of the first sin, and which sinks so deep into all that draw their origin from Adam. They should be taught to treat their superiors with peculiar deference, and should, at proper seasons, be accustomed to silence and reserve before them. Nor should they be allowed to assume airs of insolence towards their equals, but should rather be instructed to yield, to oblige, and to give up their right for the sake of peace. I shall only add that it is a great unkindness to children to indulge them in a haughty and imperious behaviour towards those who are decidedly their inferiors. They should be made to understand that the servants of the family are not their servants, nor to be under their control.

The last virtue which I shall mention is self-denial. When I see children humored and indulged by their parents, it always brings to my mind the account which one of the Fathers of the Church gives of the ancient Carthaginians. He is speaking of that diabolical custom which prevailed among them, of offering their children to a detestable idol, so formed that an infant put into its hands, which were stretched out to receive it, would immediately fall into a gulf of fire. He adds a circumstance which cannot be mentioned without horror; that the mothers, who with their own hands presented the little innocents, thought it an unfortunate omen that the victim should be offered weep-

ing; and therefore used a great many fond caresses to divert it, that, soothed by the kisses and caresses of a parent, it might smile in the dreadful moment in which it was to be given up to the idol. My brethren, such is the parental love of those who are foolishly intent on satisfying the wayward whims and inclinations of their children; a fond solicitude that they may pass smiling into the hands of the destroyer. For, be assured, he who has been accustomed to have his humors indulged when a child, will also, being possessed of no self-command, have his passions gratified when he becomes a man, and thus will forfeit all claim to the title of a disciple of Christ. But, of the necessity of self-denial in the Christian warfare, you are all sufficiently convinced; I will therefore observe, that it is also necessary in order to enable a child to pass comfortably through *this world.* For, whatever unexperienced youth may dream, a great many distasteful and mortifying circumstances will occur in life, which will unhinge his mind almost every hour, and ruin his peace, if he cannot control his appetites. Endeavor, therefore, to teach your children this important lesson betimes, confident that, if you succeed, you will leave them much richer and happier than the most plentiful estate could make them. For this end, do not allow them to fare luxuriously. Never suffer them to carry any point by obstinacy, noise, and clamor, which is indeed to bestow a reward on a fault which deserves a severe reprimand. When they are eagerly and intemperately desirous of a trifle, they ought for that very reason to be refused it, that they may learn to be more moderate for the future. If by such methods you teach them to conquer their little humors and fancies, you have taught them no inconsiderable branch of that true wisdom which will keep them unmoved amid the dangerous seductions of the world.

There yet remains one part of a parent's duty to his children, which must not be entirely omitted. It regards the provision which you ought to make for their establishment in the world. It is your bounden obligation to furnish them with a sufficiency for beginning life in a situation proportionate to their birth and reasonable expectations. If, indeed, from misfortunes or losses you have not the means of making for them such a provision, then with calm resignation and confidence commit them to the

fatherly care of Him, who can make them happier in their poverty, than they would have been with riches. But if, by extravagance, excesses, gaming, indolence, or other vices, you render yourselves unable to start them in life, your crime is in itself unnatural and enormous, and to them, most probably, will prove a source of many miseries. To see a child turned into the world friendless and disregarded, exposed to every hardship, perhaps purchasing subsistence by selling his soul to iniquity; and to reflect, that for this its desolate condition, it has to reproach, not a stranger, not an enemy, but the parent who brought it into the world, the parent, who, by all the laws of God and of nature was bound to tender it with every care,—how shocking, how heart-rending a spectacle! But, though I maintain that it is your duty to provide for your children in a suitable manner, I do not say that you should drudge and slave through life; much less, that you should shut your ears against the cries of the indigent around you, in order to leave your children in affluence at your decease. No! enjoy to yourselves an ample portion of the fruits of your industry, and deposit no inconsiderable share, by deeds of benevolence, in the treasury of heaven. The consequence of a parent's toiling without intermission, to enrich his children, is frequently this:—the children, having been brought up in close restraints, from the industrious habits of their father's house, and finding themselves, at his demise, free and uncontrolled, riot in dissipation and vice, and, in the end, have but too much reason to bewail that parental fondness which tortured itself, to make them eventually wretched, both here and hereafter. And the effects of hard-heartedness to the poor are frequently not less deplorable. It draws down from Providence a curse upon the possessions of the parent, who is amazed to find his wealth sinking away from him, he knows not how, and to see those children reduced to wretchedness and beggary, whom he intended for affluence and enjoyment.

And you, my dear children, the lambs of the flock, for whom I have been speaking so long, let me now speak to you; and do you endeavor, for a few moments, to mind every word I say. You see, it is your parents' duty to bring you up for God. The great Creator of heaven and earth has been pleased expressly

to command that you should be trained up for him. It is out of love for you, that he has given this command, and you ought to be affected by it, and should inquire, what you can do in return. Now, there are two things which I would ask of every one of you; and, I am sure, if you love your own souls, you will not deny me either of them. The first of these is: Be willing to learn. The things which you should be taught, are very useful; and your happiness depends on your acquaintance with them. So Christ himself says: *This is eternal life; that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Therefore, you should not think much of the labor of learning. You, like thousands of others, might have been born in a place where you would never have heard the name of Christ, where you might never have been instructed in your duty to your Maker, nor have been told of the world beyond the grave. And will you be so ungrateful, as not to learn, when God has made such provision for your instruction? That would be foolish and wicked indeed,—I hope much better things of you. This, then, is my first advice: Be willing to learn. Secondly, take care that you do not learn in vain. The great truths which you are taught, are not intended merely to fill your heads with notions, but to influence your hearts and your lives. You know the way to your father's house, every step of it; but yet you would never reach home, if you would not walk in it. No more will it signify to know the way to heaven, unless you walk in that way. *If you know these things*, says Jesus Christ, *happy are you if you do them.* But, if you do them not, it had been happier for you if you had never known them.

I have now done. I shall finish this series of instructions as I began it. I told you, at the very commencement, that I despaired of effecting any good, that I had not the least hope of inspiring religious sentiments into the hearts of your children or of forming their conduct to virtuous practice, without your co-operation. I repeat the assertion now. It is not here, my brethren, that the great task of religious education can be fully accomplished. It is beneath your own roofs, under your own eyes, in the retirement of your own homes. It is you alone who can know the various characters of your little ones, follow

the progressive openings of their minds, and adapt all your lessons to their wants and their capacities. It is you alone, who, being always with them, can seize the happy moments when instruction will best be received, and avail yourselves of all the little incidents of life, from which wisdom may be gathered: and above all, it is you alone, who can convey to them information in that tone of parental tenderness, which no other human voice can imitate, and to which God hath opened every avenue of the infant heart. I therefore implore your help. I implore it for my own sake, that my apprehensions may be calmed. I implore it for the sake of your beloved children, whose temporal and eternal lot, as I have shown, depends upon you. I implore it for your own sakes; your happiness in this world and in the next is inseparably connected with that of your children. I implore it for the sake, and in the name of your God, of that God, who has done so much for you, and whose interest and glory you may in return so effectually promote, by a punctual discharge of this part of your duty to him.

May the same gracious and Almighty Being enlighten your understandings and direct your tongues; and, at the same time, give to your children docile and obedient hearts, that what you inculcate they may retain and practice; till, after the short interval of separation, which the difference of age naturally leads you to expect, you meet again in the celestial Canaan, never more to part, but to live together, for eternity, in the secure enjoyment of unbounded bliss.

Sermon LVI.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost.

ON MORTALITY.

Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.—Gen. iii. 19.

For any moral purpose, but especially for enforcing the duty of penance, I know of no lesson more effectual than that contained in this sentence. It is on this account that the Church prefixes it to the title-page, and makes it the motto, of her penitential fast, and inscribes it, in emblematic ashes, on the foreheads of her children. Business, it is possible, or vanity, or that unhappy sloth, which to many Christians of these days, renders the most interesting scenes of their religion insipid and irksome, has withheld many of you from attending that moving and instructive spectacle; but, though the ceremony is peculiar to the commencement of the Lenten fast, the lesson, which it is meant to convey, is useful at all times, and perhaps never more appropriate than now, when we are about to enter on that other penitential season, which should prepare us for the birth of Christ. I therefore propose to entertain you, this day, on the sad sentence of our mortality: *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.* To give it all its effect, I will take a large view of it; I will consider it in the past, and in the future. For, among our many misfortunes, one, and not the least, is, that though gifted both with recollection and foresight, and able at pleasure to call up the past and spread out the future before us, we seldom do either to any useful purpose: we neither improve ourselves among the useful recollections of the past, nor entertain ourselves with the momentous anticipations of the future. In pursuing the plan proposed,

I shall at once counteract this unhappy disposition, and give the subject all that latitude which its powerful interest demands. The sentence of mortality, therefore, *as already executed in the past*, and as *about to be executed in the future*, will form the comprehensive range of the present discourse.

Few are so little read in the annals of the world as not to know what a vast interval divides the present moment from the commencement of time. When, however, we have travelled back to that remote and indistinct beginning, we find that there intervened a series of about two thousand years before the epoch of the universal deluge. Alongside of this prodigious period, how puny does our short, yet to us important, life appear! how insignificant even one of our centuries! Here let us pause and indulge our reflections.

Within this wide expanse of ages we may crowd, at leisure, all that imagination can suggest;—powerful empires, splendid cities, populous marts;—renowned kings, illustrious statesmen, famed legislators, warriors, and sages;—sumptuous palaces, time-defying monuments, trophies, mausoleums, and pyramids: *for there were giants on the earth in those days*, says the Scripture;—wars, which shook whole continents, treaties, on which hung the fate of nations, political combinations, family alliances, with all those other great events, which fill the history of mankind, wherever its details have reached us. To us, in the dim retrospect, these things now appear of little moment; but they were fully as important to those mighty men of longevity, as the petty concerns of our generation are to us. Let me then ask: where, now, is the busy theatre with its mighty actors, *those famous men of old*, as the Scripture terms them, with their passions and their projects, their exploits, their feasts, and their triumphs? *They have perished*, says the wise man, *as if they had not been.* Of all that they once were, how much have they transmitted to us? The solid globe, our common support, yet without one feature of what it was; their original dust somewhere entombed and mingled among its superficial mould; and of all the rest, what can we display? Among the cabinets of the curious, perhaps, are found a few animal remains, which the antiquarian, not able to match among living creatures, pleases himself with referring to an antediluvian world. But perhaps

their memory has been more fortunate; their exploits at least, if no part of themselves, have reached us! The eventful history of twenty centuries is compressed into two scanty pages of the only book in the world that ventures to tell a single syllable of their antiquated tale! Thirty names are all that have reached us; and, even of these, that they lived so many years, and that they died, is nearly all we know. As for the rest, their turmoils, their projects, their achievements are all buried in eternal silence, and are, to us, as if they had never been. *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.*

Passing over that great catastrophe, which, as a broad and eternal barrier, separates the antediluvian world from what we may more properly call our own, let us again contemplate the scene. From that remote epoch to our own, lies a wide interval of near four thousand years: over the vast expanse, as we cast a retrospective eye, what matter for reflection! In its earlier division appear four principal dynasties, that figured on the scene. First, the Babylonians swayed the sceptre of the world; the victorious Persians wrested it from them; these sunk under the more manly Greek, who, in his turn, was swallowed up by all-conquering Rome, on whose wide spread ruins the present nations of the earth are seated. See, in how brief a moment the eventful history is told; see how its distant extremes are compressed, at will, into a span! Each important section of it appeared, in its passage, all-engrossing, interminable; and in the retrospect, it dwindles into a barely distinguishable point! During this series of years, what myriads of men must have covered the earth, rich and poor, great and little, renowned and obscure! Where are they now? The exterminating sentence, again, has swept them from existence. From existence? They are blotted out even from memory. Yes, the famous among them flattered themselves, doubtless, with an exemption from the general oblivion, at least, if not from the common doom, and that they should stand up conspicuous to the view of their posterity: and now, looking back from this distance, we attempt in vain to descry them. A blank waste intervenes, with at most a few solitary names interspersed, a mere mockery of the whole; and all the rest are sunk in utter

oblivion, of no more note to us than the meanest of their cotemporaries; nor shall any researches ever be able to rescue their memories, nor the profoundest antiquary ever hope to pour the slightest ray into the thick night that has enveloped them! *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.*

A few indeed, as I said, have escaped the general wreck; history has snatched them from oblivion. But what, after all, does it amount to? A transient reviviscence in the momentary breath of their posterity;—a shadowy and unreal image in their capricious remembrance. We utter their names at intervals, and they expire again with the unsubstantial breath; we cast an occasional eye over the charactered page, and, closing the volume, consign them to unregarded oblivion. And this is all the advantage an immortal Alexander has over the obscurest of his soldiers. Nor are the events with which these countless individuals were connected less pathetically instructive than their own fate: for they too had an existence, they were once important and interesting; marriages, births, family alliances, inheritances of fortune. How moving is it to think now on the various ferment which these once excited; on the hopes they raised, on the spirits they elevated, on the looks, the gestures, the language they once kindled into animation; and now they are as utterly forgotten as if they had never been—of much less consequence than the meanest incident of the day that is passing over us. And no wonder this, since the great events of mankind, the changes of states, the transfers of empire, the successions of thrones, public rejoicings, which once agitated whole countries, and occupied a nation at once on their undivided interest, even these have long ago passed into insignificance, and subsist no more but in a few scattered traces on the historic page, where their chief, if not only utility, is to instruct and admonish other ages, and to enforce the emphatic lesson: *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.*

Descending now through the remaining interval of the past, we observe only a repetition of the same scene, the unvaried and ceaseless operation of the same mortal law, with this single difference, that, as we draw nearer to our own days, we discover a

few more remnants of the past; that is to say, history is somewhat more copious, her narrative somewhat more particular in names and incidents. But this is all; the realities themselves are as completely extinct as if buried in the remote night of antiquity. Indeed, as we read over their fresher memorials, I question whether the lesson which they give is not even more impressive. We enter with more interest into their recent story, we are detained more pleasingly among their fuller details, and, consequently, the secret comparison of past and present returns upon us with more force than ever. "Where is now," we involuntarily exclaim, "all this life and action? This same scene, once so busy with all its distinguished actors? This man of power, swaying distant nations from his delegated seat? His place knows him no more. This thunderbolt of war, scattering all opposition in his rapid progress? Spent and hushed, as the forgotten storm. This persuasive voice, swaying the counsels of a nation, and ruling at will the listening multitude? No more to be found than the breath which was its vehicle." And thus of all the other prominent characters, which arrest our attention for a moment on the historic page. Their eminence only serves to contrast with their annihilation; the interest which they excite, only to point the moral, *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.*

But there remains another portion of the past, which must not be forgotten. I mean that portion of it, which has just gone by, of which we ourselves were contemporaries. Here, we have not had to take on credit the execution of the mortal sentence; we have witnessed it with our own eyes. Compare the two extremes of our existence; how different is the aspect of the world from what it was on our first appearance! How different is the political world! How many changes has it undergone! how few of its former features does it retain! Had we not gone along with its revolutions, we might be at a loss to know our place. And what is this, but still the operation of the same great law, which acts on a public, as on a private scale, and, at due intervals, lays empires in the dust. If we descend into the world of private life, still more affecting is the change. How many do we now miss, who began the journey of life in our company? How many vacancies do we already count with

concern, in the sphere of our acquaintance! How contracted already is the small circle of our coevals! Each year makes its depredations: each year removes a predecessor in existence, and advances us nearer the computed goal; till we become in turn the elders of our age, the last remnants, the scanty historians, the mouldering monuments of an expiring generation. And what is all this, my brethren, but the regular though silent progress of that inevitable law, which, after involving in its career, as we have seen, all that have preceded us, is hastening, in the next instance, to fall upon ourselves? To this, then, its future execution, I now call your attention.

As, in the former part, we first enlarged our view by a wide and general contemplation, so it will be of advantage to commence on a similar scale here. There is no observing with effect the operations of time, without a temporary change of our position; just as the traveller would in vain watch the flowing of the stream, while keeping pace with it upon its margin, or while borne along himself upon its gliding surface. We will advance, therefore, in imagination, fifty, sixty, or at most a hundred years into the future; this will be abundantly sufficient to exemplify to us the effects of the mortal sentence. To confine ourselves to the single spot which we inhabit, what shall we observe? Of the many thousands, who now people this great city, not one surviving! a new face of things entirely; a new generation sprung up, a new city arisen, and subsisting, unconscious, over the ruins of the former. We, indeed, to whom one generation gradually melts into another, and who go along with the transition, can but ill conceive such an effect; but to one who could view it with advantage,—to one, for example, of patriarchal longevity, who, after such an interval, should revisit the scene,—this would be precisely its appearance; as if some storm had passed over the spot, or some convulsion of nature had shaken it to its foundations, and, burying one race in the earth, had raised another out of their ashes. Other faces will then brighten the public resorts, and the public ways be worn by other footsteps; other tenants will occupy our abodes, and other inmates will fill our apartments; and, while sitting, perhaps, in the very spot where we once breathed and

spoke and acted, will no more think of us than if we had never existed.

Were any proof or illustration of this required, it were easy to give it. We have it in ourselves: we are here in the capacity of witnesses, as well as of prophets. Of those who peopled the scene a century before us, where are now the survivors? How many are left to tell us the history of their contemporaries? But I should not ask this:—how many survive even in our remembrance? Who thinks now of the busy thousands, as important in their day as we, who passed and repassed in our common thoroughfares, who trafficked on the common marts, who intrigued in the public courts, and figured on the public resorts? We breathe the same atmosphere, we tread in their very footsteps, we walk even over their mortal remains, and almost spurn, I may say, their once animated dust, and yet glance not a thought on the interesting proximity which exists between us. Can we expect another fate? We are even decked in their spoils; their property has descended to us; their very utensils, perhaps, are in our hands; we sit under the roofs which covered them; we fill their very places in existence:—and yet how seldom do we disturb their memories with a thought or an inquiry. Our case, be assured, will be exactly parallel; we shall pass away in our turn and be forgotten. Another century will see the mortal sentence as complete in its triumph over this generation as we now observe it over the past. How many times has this been said; how many times has the prediction been uttered! and they who made it, have now added their testimony to its truth. The preacher and his audience have alike exemplified their subject. In like manner, the language which I now direct to you, shall one day fill the mouth of another speaker, and we shall then be cited in confirmation of its justness. The sacred orator will look back into the retrospect, as we have this day, and calling us up from the dust, will make us stand as testimonials of his appeal, to exemplify in our turn the lesson of mortality, and point for others the melancholy moral: *Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return.*

These views of the future, my brethren, should make us feel the vanity of all our earthly anxieties, and, for the moment at least, should unbind us from the world. But, the sentence,

thus considered, is perhaps too remote to be intensely apprehended, too general to be individually felt: the threatening blow, to rouse and stimulate, must be seen more nearly impending; it must reach the man. Let us, then, consider the sentence as about to be executed on each individual among us. Here it must be as impossible to be indifferent, as it would be absurd to hope for exemption; no man can listen unconcerned to his inevitable destiny. That it is inevitable, is of all points the least disputed; there is no acknowledgment which we more freely make, than that we are mortal, and must certainly die—though possibly no words that mean so much are so little regarded. It is the full import of these familiar words which I wish to examine; I would know, and consider with you in detail, what it is to die. And why should we shrink from the prospect? Surely, if our foresight was given us for any useful purpose, it was for this,—that we might familiarize ourselves with the unavoidable evils of the future, and wear down their terrors by anticipation.

Let us, then, endeavor to fix our view steadily on the subject. *It is decreed*, in the words of the apostle, *for all men once to die:* that is, there is, to each of us, one among the coming years, that shall carry his fate within its bosom: of its months one, that shall mark him in its obituary; of the days of that month one, the first, or the twelfth, or the twentieth, on this side of eternity unknown and indefinite, but on the other already marked, irrevocably fixed, but to be revealed to us only in its execution; a day which shall arrest each of us in the path of life, and forbid our further passage. On that day, the commissioned malady, whichever it be, shall go forth, and seizing on its victim, shall prostrate him, without resistance, on his last couch, the very same, perhaps, on which he nightly takes his secure repose. The variations of the distemper will at last fix in certainty. Physicians, if they flatter, will at last retire; and friends and attendants will be silent in vain; for a voice of death will speak within us, and let us know, in terms too plain to be mistaken, that our inevitable hour is come, and that we must take our turn in the common sentence. It is surprising, with what tranquillity we hear similar tidings of others. In a relative, perhaps, the intelligence shocks and pains us; in a

neighbor or acquaintance, it passes off with a start or an exclamation; but, if any one should attempt to interest us in the fate of a stranger, we should deem him unbearably impertinent and absurd. Alas! how different will be our feelings, when the case is about to be our own. All other affairs will then be nothing to us; we shall be entirely engrossed by our own situation, and it will even seem as if the world itself ought to stand still, and show some sympathy at our distress. But, alas! the world will be otherwise employed; it will no more concern itself about us than we did about others; and pursuing, as before, its business and its amusements, will leave us to die unpitied and unregarded. From our chamber of death, we shall be constrained to hear the passing voices of its busy throng, the rattle of its equipages, or the uproar of its mirth. How bitter will be the contrast! We dying, and our fellow-mortals unconcerned, and enterprising, and light-hearted as ever! Oh! if we could but have those feelings now, which we shall certainly experience then, how speedily would they disabuse us of our error, cool our vain ardors, and at one stroke untie us from the world! I believe, the situation was never conceived by any one, as it is felt: much, however, may be done by reflection. Let us, therefore, proceed. Not that I mean to describe the various pangs by which our expiring nature, at its exit out of this world, pays back the throes of its entrance into it; nor to show how the several senses, by their respective sufferings and gradual extinction, expiate the various sins, of which during life they were the unhappy instruments. This would detain me too long; but one observation I cannot forbear. Do you, my brethren, when you speak of your mortality, remember, that those very extremities, which are then to give the first symptoms of fading vitality, those hands, those arms, which are then to lie palsied and powerless by your side, are the very same which you now own and animate? Alas! I fear it is seldom the serious thought comes so much home to the man: we think and speak as if we were to die in the person of another. Reflect, then, now for once, and fix the unsteady idea, that you actually bear about you all the particular instruments of your last sufferings. You listen to me with the very ears which are then to tingle with the sounds of death; you look upon me with the very eyes which

are then to swim dull and sightless in their sockets; you taste, you articulate, you jest with the very tongue which then shall lie paralyzed and speechless; and that same heart, which shall then gradually relax its vital play, and by its last flutter dismiss you from existence,—you have it now within you, throbbing at the anticipation! My brethren, is it thus that we think of death? Is it with these sentiments we speak of mortality? If it were, I think we should not be so much at ease.

Whether, during these sad moments, the soul shall be conscious of her situation, and forced to sit watching the progress of dissolution, is a question of no moment: but she will be fully sensible of what is immediately to follow,—the sudden bursting of the earthly spell, the rush into the world of spirits, a present Deity, an awaiting Judge, the instantaneous sentence and the great alternative, an eternal hell or an eternal heaven. Deserted now by its quickening partner, the body resumes its original inertness and insensibility, and, by its rapid tendency to corruption, significantly points to, and redemands its parent bed. Borne by the hands of fellow-mortals, themselves soon to stand in need of a similar good office, it is conducted to the expecting grave: the yawning earth closes over it; and, long ere its last image has faded to the eye of the survivor, it is itself lost and confounded in the common mass: thus verifying to the letter, *Dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return.*

In conclusion, my brethren, let me exhort you to retrace occasionally the steps which you have this day taken with me, to make the past a frequent comment on the future, and the future, particularly its last scene, a constant object of your anticipation. Endeavor to enforce the impression which your own meditations may make, by such opportunities as Providence puts in your way: pause occasionally over the time-worn memorials of departed friends or relatives; and stand sometimes beside the bed of expiring humanity; read, in those affecting scenes, your own most certain fate; carry home with you the salutary impression, and repicture the scene in your own abode, in your own apartment, on your own familiar couch, where indeed it is more than possible it may be actually realized. Endeavor to close every day with the serious thought, and allow it to mingle with the devotions of every night; habitually re-

flecting, as you stretch your limbs in repose, on that future condition, of which you are putting on the expressive resemblance; and, as you close your eyes in sleep, ever remembering that last slumber, from which nothing but the last trumpet can awake you. To elude such recollections, as gloomy and repulsive, is most unwise. Even if they did superinduce a little temporary sadness, of which no encourager of them was ever yet found to complain, surely this inconvenience would be not ill repaid, by that last and greatest of blessings, which they are the effectual means of securing—a happy death.

Sermon LIX.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost.

THE LAST DAY.

Amen, I say to you; this generation shall not pass, till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.—MATT. xxiv. 34, 35.

THESE words, with which the Church both commences and concludes her evangelical year, call your attention to that great scene, emphatically denominated, in sacred language, the last day. One of the characteristics of the Deity, which he has himself pointed out to us in his inspired oracles, is, that he is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. His revealed religion is marked with a similar feature. With respect to this material world, she may be called the beginning and the end: she invincibly proves herself divine, by the sublime and sovereign manner in which she disposes of both extremities. Who, but religion, has taught us how we were created, and how this our inhabited earth began? On this subject, what human system does not sink into contempt, by the side of her simple and majestic narrative? In like manner, who, but religion, pretends to inform us how this great scene is to terminate? On the former head, man has attempted a few feeble conjectures; but on the latter, if I mistake not, he has been utterly silent. Or, if his unassisted reason has ventured to touch the subject, he has been afraid to pronounce his favored abode perishable; and, seeing it permanent amid all his own changes, has vainly imagined it to be eternal. Religion alone speaks out with confidence on the dark but interesting subject, and boldly declares that the world is not eternal; that, temporary like its lord, it

shall one day pass away like him: *heaven and earth shall pass away.*

Even as mere matter of curiosity and contemplation, I can imagine no subject more choice and inviting to the mind: the last of days—the great epilogue;—the closing page of man's eventful history, which is to shut up the long-expected volume, or rather to supersede at once all its insignificant records! But, my brethren, the subject is not merely curious; it is one of deep interest and expectation; for it speaks of a scene, in which you are yourselves to appear, not as remote spectators, but to act your several parts. Induced by these considerations, and, above all, encouraged and authorized by the Church of God, I venture this day to approach the awful and interesting, but arduous, subject. Attempting little of my own, I will assemble, select, and digest for you, what has been said by those who alone have a right to speak on the subject—the inspired writers.

Man, by his fall, seems to have involved in that mortality, which was its punishment, all that is connected with him: even the world, which he inhabits, is become mortal, like himself. As *it is decreed for all men once to die*, so it is decreed that the world shall perish. There will come a day, which to this universe will be final and fatal. That day is already known in the counsels of heaven: but, to us, one of its most awful and alarming circumstances is its inscrutable uncertainty. In this, as in other particulars, it bears a remarkable resemblance to man's individual sentence, which from nothing borrows so much terror as from that mysterious darkness which hangs over its execution. *As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be then. For as, in the days before the deluge, men were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till the very day when Noah entered the ark, and they knew not, till the deluge came and carried them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of Man.*

This uncertainty, too, will subsist in the midst of the most pointed warnings; for no future event was ever marked out by more striking and plainer preludes. Here, also, it keeps up its parallel with the dissolution of man. For, as that dreaded event is commonly preceded by a succession of appearances

and symptoms, both remote and proximate, which indicate to every eye, but perhaps the interested individual, that the human machine is running down and hastening to its last stroke; so, it has pleased the Almighty to usher in the great day of the world's dissolution, by a series of preludes, which shall clearly announce that its last hour is approaching. Its remoter indications may be said to be the general decay of faith and piety among men; the coldness and almost total extinction of charity; the wide-spread corruption of manners; the neglect of divine worship, and the appearance of that mysterious character, called in scripture anti-christ, or the man of sin, who is to seduce many from the true faith, to deceive with signs and wonders, and to make war on the Church of God. When these have subsisted their due period, then shall commence those more immediate symptoms, so awfully accumulated in the divine oracles. *You shall hear*, says the Son of God, *of wars and rumors of wars; nation shall rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be pestilences, and famines, and earthquakes. These are the beginnings of sorrows.* Let us expand a little, and dwell on these fearful particulars.

There shall be wars. Man himself shall begin the work of destruction, and co-operate with the vengeance of heaven. This is signified under the figure of the red horse, which was seen by St. John. *And to him that sat thereon it was given, that he should take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and a great sword was given him.*—Men, restless and agitated with all the furies of discord and revenge, will turn their ferocity against their own species, will assemble in vast bodies for the destruction of each other, and cover the earth with the blood of its inhabitants. If past history speaks of rivers of blood shed in battle, here shall be a deluge. *The wine-press*, in the mystic language of St. John, *was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even up to the horses' bridles, for a thousand six hundred furlongs.*—*And there shall be famines.* Famine is the natural concomitant of war, and accordingly is the next figure presented to us in the Apocalypse, as the black horse, the rider of which held a balance in his hand, wherein he was to weigh rigorously the scanty necessaries of existence. And *Pestilence*, the other attendant of

war. *And behold*, says St. John, *there was a pale horse, and he that sat upon him his name was death, and hell followed him.* These three, War, Famine, and Pestilence, as we see in the history of David, are the commissioned scourges of the Almighty, which he sends forth, at intervals, to punish the sins of men. And if they are even now so terrible, devastating whole nations, as we read and even see, when yet their visitations are only limited and partial, what will they be, when they shall become unbounded and universal, like the deluge of iniquity which shall call them down? If they are so formidable in the day of God's mercy, what will they be when sent as harbingers to what is emphatically called the great day of his wrath?

In addition to this, the earth itself, man's own domain, will rise up against him, and, with its different elements, combine to scourge him. *There shall be earthquakes*, says the divine oracle. The solid globe, as if no longer patient of its iniquitous burden, shall swell and oscillate round its ample circumference, not with those partial and petty heavings which we have hitherto read of in history, but with such vast undulations as to threaten its destruction. *And there was*, says St. John, *a great earthquake, such a one as has never been since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.* The sea shall next add its terrors. Its awful and heart-subduing roarings shall reach the most distant lands; and their inhabitants, safe beyond intervening continents, will start and shudder at the portentous sound. I am not exaggerating; I am giving but a feeble paraphrase of the very words of the Son of God. *There shall be distress of nations by reason of the roaring of the sea, and of the waves, men withering away through fear and expectation of what shall come upon the world.* Next the air will charge itself with vengeance. We have already seen it loaded with pestilence and death; besides this, St. John speaks of lightnings, and thunders, and whirlwinds, and vast hail like a torrent; the whole artillery of heaven exploding on the devoted earth.

As the awful day draws nearer, the great tempest of nature shall still thicken; the convulsions of an agonizing world shall become still more terrific. *The day of the Lord is nigh*, cries

out the prophet, *it is nigh and exceeding swift; the voice of the day of the Lord is bitter. A day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds.* The prophet seems lost under the accumulation of its terrors; but let us hear Him, who was the Inspirer of the prophets, himself depict the extraordinary catastrophe. *And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened; the moon shall not give her light; and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be moved.*

It only remains, that the last of the commissioned elements come in, and, with its rapid energies, obliterate the scene. *Behold the Lord will come with fire,* says Isaiah, *and his chariots are like a whirlwind, to render his wrath in indignation, and his rebuke with flames of fire; for the Lord shall judge by fire. A day of clouds and whirlwinds,* exclaims Joel, *the like to it hath not been from the beginning, nor shall be after it, even to the years of generation and generation. Before the face thereof a devouring fire, and behind it a burning flame; the land is like a garden of pleasure before it, and behind it a desolate wilderness; neither is there any one that can escape it.* Fire is, of all the elements, the most active and violent, and is therefore reserved by the Almighty for the consummation of his judgment, for the temporal death of this visible world, as well as for the eternal death of the world to come. He chastised and reformed the earth by water; he will destroy it by fire; and as, on that occasion, he not only opened the floodgates of heaven, but broke up the fountains of the great deep,—so we may naturally suppose, that now he will not only pour down the destroying element from above, but will command the great deep of hell to open its gates and send forth an inundation of fire upon the earth. It is the sentiment of one of the Fathers. Follow, my brethren, in imagination, the course, the range, the waste of this fiery deluge, as it rolls over the earth, *a garden of pleasure before it,* and instantly *a desolate wilderness behind.* Will man here, too, scale the mountains, or bury himself in the depths? Will he intrench himself behind his marble bulwarks, or attempt, by another tower, to baffle the wrath of heaven? Alas! *the elements themselves,* says St. Peter, *shall melt with heat; and*

the earth, and the works which are in it, be burnt up. His houses, his gardens, his palaces, his cities, shall be swept away in a moment by the devouring element; his limits and his landmarks, his provinces and his countries, shall be rapidly effaced; every trace of his existence on the earth will disapper, and all lie low and level, in one undistinguished blank.

Thus, my brethren, are all the great preludes accomplished; thus is the earth prepared for the coming judgment of its Creator. And it was fitting, that whatever had risen prominent on its surface, should be levelled into insignificance before Him; and that nothing, of all that once divided the attention of his creatures, should, when he came to take his final cognisance, be found standing in his presence.

Where now are those who once most figured in the busy scene, who fondly flattered themselves with immortality? who labored hard during life to gain it, and left no art unpractised to secure it after death? Oh, mockery of earthly ambition! oh, cruel satire on human vanity! What better application could we make of the celebrated sentence of the Wise Man, than to inscribe it here, as an epitaph on the tomb of a buried world? *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity.* And if, my brethren, those schemes and projects, which enjoyed, after all, some semblance of greatness, and at least a shadow of success, are to have at last so pitiful an exit, what shall become of those petty objects which now occupy and fill our minds?—that fortune which one is raising?—that fame which another is aiming at?—that treasure of science which a third is accumulating?—that trivial distinction which a fourth affects, of person, dress, or equipage? Where shall then be found these insignificant nothings, which even now have no real importance, and yet, unhappily, divert us from our only interest, bind us to this perishable earth, and make us forget our last end, and the great Judge before whom we are infallibly to appear.

At the appointed hour, ere the great Judge descends upon the earth, he will give the signal to his attendant angels, four of whom will instantly take their station at each quarter of the globe, and sound forth from the celestial trumpet the resuscitating decree: *Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment.* The powerful voice will instantaneously echo round the vast convex,

pierce earth and sea, and resound in the lowest hell. *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,* says the apostle, *the dead shall rise;* from first to last, they shall all wake from their long slumber, reanimate their original dust, and be seen issuing forth in throngs from their various repositories, the bowels of the earth, the depths of the ocean, and the abyss of hell. St. John saw it: *And the sea,* says he, *gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up the dead that were in them.* Of the immense series, not one shall be overlooked or missing; the least and obscurest shall appear, as surely as the greatest and most famous; the infant of a day, who only just saw the light of heaven, and resunk into oblivion, as certainly as the patriarch of nine hundred years; all who once drew the breath of life shall revive, and cover the earth; *an army,* in the language of Scripture, *exceeding vast.* If the posterity of one family is compared to the sands of the sea-shore, by what shall we aid the imagination to conceive the simultaneous assemblage of the uncalculated millions that, during the long period of six thousand years, have peopled the globe?

While we cast our eyes in thought over this vast multitude of men now assembled together, for the first, yes, for the last time, what a surprising change do we observe! As we see mankind in life, nothing is more remarkable than those numerous and broad distinctions which everywhere appear in their ranks—rich and poor, noble and plebeian, lord and slave, polite and vulgar, learned and illiterate: now these have totally disappeared, and the whole is levelled down to one equal, common, undistinguished crowd. In vain shall we look for the sceptre or the diadem, the robe of office, or the sword of conquest. The renowned monarch, whom we so often read of in history, is, doubtless, here; but he is hid among the dense mass of his own subjects; the mighty conqueror, who strode across the earth with destructive march, is here too, but lost amid the rude press of the ignoble myriads, upon whom he once trampled. One simple distinction alone remains; which before existed indeed unperceived, but now breaks forth, and extinguishes every other—the distinction of good and bad; the former clothed with light, beauty, and immortality, the latter unsightly and hideous. Oh! my friends, what will be the confusion and astonishment

of the great ones of this world, when they shall see those whom they once hardly deigned to look upon, exalted in power and glory, and themselves sunk in impotence and disgrace, thrust aside without regard, as the scorn and refuse of the assembly! What will be the shame and agony of the fair ones of the world, when they shall see those charms, of which they were foolishly vain, and guiltily prodigal, transferred with infinite improvement to the neglected beggar, or loathed leper, and themselves stamped with eternal deformity!

But from these reflections, my brethren, it is now time to turn to a scene, which will quickly absorb them. But, how shall I attempt to give you an idea of a spectacle so awful and so extraordinary,—Heaven itself coming down in judgment! Even the judgment-seat of man is surrounded with awe and dread. What, then, may be expected, when the Son of God himself, appointed by his eternal Father supreme Judge of the living and the dead, shall disclose his tribunal, surrounded with all the grandeur and terrors of his omnipotence? His appearance will be as the lightning darting from east to west; that is, no sooner shall the dazzling vision burst on the horizon, than it will envelope the whole hemisphere in a blaze of glory. The assembled multitude will instantly turn towards it their intensest gaze. *And every eye shall see him*, says St. John, *and they also that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him.* In front of the judicial array will appear the ensign of the cross, that comfort of the just and terror of the wicked, environed with dazzling effulgence, and surpassed only by Him whose sign it is. He will be the great focus of regard, riding supreme on the clouds, clothed in all the beauty and grandeur of his visible humanity, and supported with all the power of his invisible divinity. The whole court of heaven will be his attendants, and, arrayed in visible forms, will surround his throne, in their several hierarchies, order above order, filling the air with their countless myriads, and illumining it with ten thousand glories. He himself has assured us of these particulars. *When the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the seat of his majesty. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn: and they shall see the Son*

of man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty.

In this form will the judicial pomp descend; and, as it reaches its destination, the just will rise into the clouds to meet it, taking their station, likewise, in the air aloft, while the reprobates are left in the vale beneath, grovelling on that earth which was the theatre of their crimes and the utmost object of their low desires. Then without delay the judgment will proceed; it will not be lingering and tedious, like human trials, but summary and rapid. *The judgment sat*, says the prophet, *and the books were opened;*—those books, in which are minutely and unerringly recorded all the moral transactions of men, from the beginning of time. These shall be instantly displayed in the face of the universe, and each individual life exposed in broad characters to its gaze. If a little shame be now so powerful, in this petty scene, so scanty and so circumscribed, what must be the effect, on the guilty soul, of this complete and universal publicity? Here there will be neither excuse nor defence, neither patron nor advocate, neither appeal nor repentance. What treasures of iniquity will then appear! what works of darkness will be brought to light! What extraordinary discoveries will then be made! what manifestations and justifications of Divine Providence! Then shall be seen the reason why one man, with every virtue that could merit prosperity, was pursued with unrelenting adversity; and why another was allowed to riot in every guilty pleasure, and yet die in peace, though a debtor to all the vengeance of heaven. Then, too, shall be explained all the mysteries and paradoxes of human character and conduct: it shall be seen, why this man so unaccountably resisted all the impressions of grace; what was the secret bar, which prevented their efficacy: why that man, after the most promising beginning, made a sudden and ominous pause in the way of virtue, and was never afterwards seen to advance; why a third, living in the midst of light, was never enlightened, that is to say, why, surrounded with evidences of the true religion, and pressed by them on every side, in reading, in argument, in observation, in reflection, he was able to withstand, where so many thousands had yielded: and why a fourth, who apparently possessed every moral virtue that could prepare the way for the true faith, yet

did never attain it, but continued to the last an alien from salvation, in spite of the exhortations of friendship, the invitations of example, and the prayers and tears of a pious family. All these discoveries will then be made, with many others, too numerous even for allusion. On the other hand, all the secret and retiring merits of the just will be brought forward and displayed in glory;—all those virtues, which they studiously concealed, oftentimes under the assumed garb of a repulsive exterior;—all those deeds of beneficence and piety, which they carefully buried in oblivion;—all those generous ardors, by which, wanting the means, they burned with the desires of the most arduous sacrifices, and thus in secret made every merit their own.

But it is time that we hear the definitive sentence, which is to conclude this awful scene. Preparatory to this, charge will be given to the ministering spirits, to arrange on either hand the sheep and the goats, that is, to assemble the just on the right hand, and to drive the reprobate to the left. Then the great Judge, collecting into his heavenly countenance all that beauty, of which he is the sole centre, all that sweetness, of which he is the ravishing source, all that love, of which he is the immense ocean, will say to those on his right hand, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, receive ye the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.* Oh, thrice happy ears, which shall be found worthy to hear this sentence! Who shall express what the hearts of the just will feel at its pronunciation? If the human breast heaves so powerfully at the infusion of those little drops of joy which occasionally refresh it in this miserable life, how will it support that flood of rapture with which these divine words will deluge its small capacity?

Then, turning to the unhappy multitude on his left hand, armed with all the frowns and terrors of angry Omnipotence, he will thunder out against them the dreadful anathema: *Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels.* Both of these sentences will be immediately executed. The happy just will hear the dreadful award of the wicked, with acquiescence and approbation: the time is now come for them, in the language of the Scripture, *to wash their hands in the blood of the sinner;* the feelings of commiseration and charity have no longer any place, but are swallowed up in

the sense of divine justice, with which they take part and congratulate. Accordingly, they will now look down with an eye of indifference on the fate, dreadful as it is, of acquaintance, of friends, and of relatives; and, absorbed in their own felicity, will rise aloft, singing canticles of jubilee, to take possession of that eternal kingdom, to which their God has so lovingly invited them.

Let us follow, then, my brethren, the different fate of the reprobate. No sooner shall the almighty voice have uttered their sentence, than the earth will yawn under their feet, and hell, opening for the last time its voracious jaws, will engulf the vast multitude in its terrible abyss. Then the infernal gates will for ever close upon them: the Eternal will affix his irrevocable seal, and shoot the bolt, which shall never be drawn back. —But oh, my brethren, how shall we express or conceive what will pass below, in the darkness and confinement of that infernal dungeon! St. John finely, but terribly, paints it to us, in these sublime words: *The smoke of their torments ascends for ever and ever.*

Yes, their dreadful torment shall incessantly steam forth a baleful vapor: the smoke thereof will ascend for ever before the eyes of the Almighty, and, in the language of Scripture, bring up in remembrance before him the sufferings of the damned;—he will remember them and will never regard them. His ears will never be open to their cries: their tears and blasphemies, their prayers and their execrations will find him equally indifferent. He will live on with his elect, in an eternity of bliss; and they will live on, with the demons, in a parallel eternity of wo; and will then conceive a hope of period or change in their sufferings, when they shall discover a hope of change or period in his essential existence.

Such will be the end of time; such the termination of this present state of things. It may be remote, but it is not on that account the less certain. You are not more secure in the present testimony of your senses, than you are in the reality of what you have here listened to; you are not more surely here present, than you will be at the last scenes, which you have here contemplated. The present assembly, so soon to separate, and perhaps ere long to scatter over the world, will there finally

meet again: the eyes, with which you now regard me, do not more certainly apprehend their object, than they will then view the great Judge on his awful tribunal: the ears with which you now listen to my voice, the very same will then re-echo with the twofold sentence, and either be ravished with the sweet invitation of the just, or astounded with the terrible condemnation of the reprobate. That the former may be our common lot is the most expressive wish and prayer which I can make in conclusion.

Sermon LXX.

Corpus Christi.

ON THE FESTIVAL.

Take ye and eat, this is my body.—1 Cor. xi. 24.

Could we comprehend the simple grandeur of this day's mystery, with what ecstatic raptures of admiration and love should we resort to its celebration! If, at the present moment, we could draw aside the veil which encircles the eyes of our frail humanity, how magnificent, how glorious a spectacle should we behold? The whole Church of God, whether triumphant in heaven or militant upon earth, combining in one universal homage. Heaven, with its myriads of angels, archangels, holy confessors, virgins, martyrs, bowing towards the earth, and contemplating in enraptured silence the scene there presented; and earth, rising aloft through the clouds of heaven, and penetrating even to the throne of God. Yes, my brethren, from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof, from one extremity of the earth to the other, from every quarter of the globe, where the clean offering foretold by Malachy has been made, there goeth forth on this day one universal voice of thanksgiving; a voice which resounds through the celestial courts, and calls upon the whole Church to praise the Lord our Saviour in hymns and canticles. I am well aware, that the unbounded goodness displayed by God in the institution of this august sacrament is at all times a theme of praise and jubilee. It is also an undoubted truth, that, wherever our Divine Redeemer lies on the altar of the eucharistic sacrifice, there numbers of angelic spirits bow themselves down in reverential homage, and adore the author of their and our being.

But on this day, which is devoted by the Church to the special veneration of this effable mystery; I am persuaded that there will be more than wonted exultation in the courts of heaven. Yes, at this moment, the united homage of the Church, the prayers of the faithful, are borne aloft by ministering angels, with more than usual triumph; the incense which rises around our altar mounts up to heaven with a more exquisite fragrance; the symphonious anthems which issue from our choirs are re-echoed by the celestial hierarchy with an unusual burst of melodious and joyful chorus. Yes, I am persuaded, all this is being realized at the present moment. And why? Because, whether triumphant in heaven or militant upon earth, the children of God form but one Church; because they are all bound together in the closest union of sympathy and love; and therefore, my brethren, when we rejoice, the citizens of heaven rejoice also: because, in fine, Jesus Christ, whom we adore here present on our altars, and in whose honor this festival has been exclusively instituted, sits at the right hand of his eternal Father, and is a source of supreme and unspeakable felicity to all those who surround his throne. With these considerations before my eyes, am I unreasonable in supposing that this day is a day of peculiar joy to the blissful inhabitants of the celestial Jerusalem? Surely not. Oh, my brethren, they do rejoice; they rejoice with us, and on our account. And while we, sensible of our weakness and insufficiency, invoke their aid, and exclaim in the words of the Psalmist, *Praise ye the Lord from the heavens, praise ye him in the high places*, they, on their parts, raise aloud the pealing anthem, and, in tones of sweetest music, call upon us to join in the song of praise. *Let the earth bless the Lord: let it praise and exalt him above all for ever.*

But, instead of vainly attempting to describe the infinite intensity of those supernatural joys, let us rather turn our attention upon ourselves. For, after all, we ought to be the principal actors in the beauteous scene of this day. It was for us that our divine Redeemer instituted this august sacrament; it is to us that he principally looks for a grateful acknowledgment. Come, then, fellow-christians, come, all you whose bosoms are still alive to the emotions of piety, let us enter into the sanctuary of God, and there, with the liveliest sentiments of profound veneration,

pour before him our gratitude and our love. Oh, it would be mournful in the extreme, if, amid the general outburst of thanksgiving, we alone should remain silent: if, while angels adore, men should sit down in thoughtless apathy. Away, then, with all coldness and indifference. Love it was that brought the hallowed victim down upon our altars: nothing but seraphic love can approach to an adequate return.

And, my dear brethren, how abundant are the reasons which call for this tribute at our hands! I do not here speak to those unfortunate worldlings, who, deaf alike to the voice of religion and reason, abandon themselves to the winds and waves of their own turbulent passions. I do not speak to those false religionists, who, unwilling to be illumined by divine truth, wander about in the dark night of their ignorance and pride. Ah, no! to such classes of men, the mysteries, which we this day celebrate, can present nothing but illusion and mockery. It is not to them that I speak. But there is another class of individuals, a chosen band, reserved by God for himself, who, setting objections at nought, where faith alone must rule, consign themselves to the certainty of revelation, and to the guidance of the Church. If, my brethren, you are among this number, oh! then, to you this solemnity must be one of tenfold interest. To you do I speak; and to you in particular does your sweet and loving Redeemer breathe out from the recess of his tabernacle the silent but impressive invitation: "My brethren, give me your hearts. What is there that I ought to do more, that I have not done? Out of love for you, I have descended from the bosom of my eternal Father. I have become, like one of you, frail and mortal. I have endured, for your sakes, all the hardships of a poor and indigent life. For you have I suffered the most cruel and ignominious of deaths. And could I do more?" Yes, most loving and most amiable Jesus! one thing was still wanting to fill up the measure of thy goodness. The bitter draught of thy sacred passion could not quench that vivid flame of love which secretly burned within thy bosom. Thy sufferings cancelled, indeed, the reprobating sentence, and reconciled man to his God. Justice was satisfied, but love was not. Thou hadst declared that thy desire was to be with the sons of men: and, because thou didst love them, thou wouldst abide with them all days, even to the

consummation of the world. See, my brethren, what powerful motives call for our devotion on this day. Ponder well on them; and if, at the contemplation, your hearts do not heave with the throb of gratitude, I know not what can awaken your sensibility. Jesus Christ obedient to man! The Creator of the universe subject to the will of his creature! What debasement! What elevation! Oh man! oh man! learn at length thy dignity—yet acknowledge thy nothingness! Amid the vast immensity of God's works, what an insignificant portion art thou? A mere worm of the earth—the being of a day—an insect, fluttering about for a short time in the arrogance of borrowed beauty, and then quickly disappearing from view, and mouldering away into dust. And is it possible, that a creature so mean should attract the peculiar notice of the King of ages, immortal and omnipotent? Yes, insignificant as thou art, on thee were fixed his complacent regards from all eternity. For thy benefit did he create all this vast and complicated machinery of the universe: but, alas! in the very dawn of thy existence, thou didst basely offend thy Creator: and thus, from being an object of complacency, thou becamest in his sight an object of abhorrence and of eternal malediction. Of thyself, thou couldst not repair the injury. The thick tempest, which the wrath of an angry God had collected round thy head, could not be dissipated by any created ray. The overwhelming mass of thy iniquity could not be removed by earthly hands. Hell was thy abode. Thou couldst never find an egress. How, then, has this thy sad destiny been averted? Oh, infinitely favored man! approach the Blessed Sacrament, and there, with grateful homage, humbly acknowledge thy Redeemer. There will Jesus Christ exhibit to thy faith that divine head which was pierced with thorns to atone for thy guilt; those hands and feet which were dug with nails; that side which was opened by the lance. And, at the contemplation of all this unmerited bounty, canst thou withhold thy love? My brethren, if at any time you feel rise within you a sense of gratitude for the benefit of redemption, remember that your Redeemer is still present on our altar, and that all the return he asks for is—your hearts; his only but constant appeal is—"Objects of my love, give me your hearts." But let us proceed, and, while we cherish in heartfelt remembrance his suffer-

ings as our Redeemer, let us for a short time consider him as our friend and comforter.

Few men have passed through life without standing in need, some time or other, of consolation. Yes, the path of life is beset with many miseries: for though the sin of our first parent has been remitted as to its eternal punishment, yet, by the decrees of an all-ruling Providence, many and various are the temporal calamities to which mankind are still subjected. Complaint may be very properly termed the language of the human race: and comparatively happy is that man who has found a friend, to whom he may make known his grievances, and who with fond sympathy can solace him in his afflictions. And where shall we find a more kind or compassionate friend, than in the Blessed Sacrament? *Come to me*, does our divine Redeemer there exclaim, *all you that labour and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you.* Yes, fellow-christians, in all your solicitudes, in all your distresses, go to Jesus. Throw yourself with confidence into his arms:—he will receive you with welcome, and will not fail to pour into your bleeding hearts the soothing balm of consolation. If you have been struck by the chill hand of poverty, if your bosoms writhe under the treachery of false friends, if your reputation be blasted by the foul breath of detraction and calumny, if your bodies fall a prey to the pangs of disease,—oh, then it is that your Saviour sweetly invites you to go to him. *Come to me, and I will refresh you.* If, in the course of your sojournment in this vale of tears, your passions sometimes rise up in harsh rebellion, if temptations allure, if your souls pine away and languish in a melancholy destitution, if your minds be ever and anon overspread with spiritual darkness; if, in fine, the flowery paths of virtue become all on a sudden transformed into a rugged and cheerless waste; then again it is that your loving Redeemer breathes out once more the joyous invitation. Yes, go to him:—he longs to give himself to you. Your sufferings, of whatever nature they be, entitle you to his compassion; they are the sure pledge of his bountiful regard. If your repeated falls alarm you, if the multitude and enormity of your past sins overwhelm you with sadness, still be not dismayed, repentant sinner: go to Jesus;—he will dispel from your minds the dark clouds of despondency; he will

dry up the frequent falling tear, he will quell the rising sigh, and restore peace and tranquillity to your troubled breasts. He will, in fine, himself, take up his abode there;—and, my brethren, can any thing under the sun ruffle the calm of that bosom in which Jesus resides? See, then, how ardent ought to be our devotion toward the blessed sacrament:—see, by how many titles the Church calls upon us to praise and glorify God, on this day of its solemnization!

But it is time to reverse the picture: and while, with the Church, we exult at the view of the unbounded goodness of God, displayed in this day's mystery, we cannot but weep over the insensibility and ingratitude of mankind. Was it in the power of God himself to select a more efficacious means of testifying his love to man? And yet how does the mind shrink from the return which is generally made him! Look at our churches. One would naturally think that, day and night, multitudes of devout adorers would assemble within the hallowed precincts, to glorify the beneficent Being who there resides. One would naturally expect that every heart would there be inflamed with the fire of devotion, that every breath would be borne aloft on the wings of seraphic love; that every eye would be cast down in humble and respectful homage. But, alas! how vain are all such expectations! Point out the spot, if you can, which is less frequented than the temple of God. Or if at any time the crowd is found within its sacred enclosure, how far is the conduct there exhibited from impressing the beholder with a feeling sense that the object of worship is the supreme Lord and Creator of the universe? Nay, who would not be led to the conclusion that, so far from having solely in view the conscientious discharge of a religious duty, the greater part are conducted thither rather by a spirit of worldliness, by an eager desire of gratifying a vain and idle curiosity! One source, then, of grief and complaint to the pious soul will be the little respect and veneration with which too many conduct themselves in regard to the Blessed Sacrament.

Another source is—the numerous and open outrages to which the infinite love of Jesus has exposed him. Ah, yes! here it is that religion mourns: here it is that torrents of tears are incessantly called forth; and here it is that we, my brethren, if

we have any love for Jesus, must bewail and lament, all the days of our lives. *Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes, and I will weep night and day* over the outraged goodness of my God. To say nothing of the cavils and libertinism of some, the open and avowed blasphemies of others, how often have your ears been startled by the recital of some execrable attempt, directed against the body itself of your adorable Redeemer! How often has the silence of the midnight hour been shocked by the perpetration of the horrible crime of sacrilege! How often, while the world lay hushed in sleep, has the stealthy foot of the sacrilegist approached the hallowed retreat, the impious hand been outstretched to violate the sanctity of God's tabernacle, and the consecrated elements, the body of your sweet Jesus, profaned, while adoring angels saw and wept. O God of love! to what a state of degradation has the excess of thy bounty reduced thee! My brethren, it was for the love of us that he suffered all this; and shall we not love him? But there is yet another species of outrage, perhaps still more atrocious, and, I will say, of more frequent occurrence;—an impiety, which renews, with aggravation, the treachery of Judas. You no doubt already perceive to what I allude. Judas betrayed his Divine Master into the hands of the Jews; the unworthy communicant, as far as in him lies, delivers him, not into the hands of men, but into those of Satan and his infernal associates. Oh! when the sacred Host enters into the mouth and breast of the unrepentant sinner, what a melancholy spectacle to the court of heaven! Man sees it not; but the Son of God does in reality there lie, in the midst of insulting and deriding foes, lamented by heaven, and scorned by hell.

My brethren, enough has already been said to indicate the twofold view, which I had in the present discourse. On the one hand, you have seen the goodness of God in the institution of the Holy Eucharist; on the other, the ingratitude and insensibility of a vast number of our fellow-mortals. Both considerations ought to stimulate us to love him with increased ardor; the first, because he has loved us infinitely; and the second, because men do not love him as they ought. Particularly, let us aim at a spirit of atonement and satisfaction. The offended

majesty of God punishes in a dreadful manner the heinous crime of sacrilege; like the blood of Abel, it cries aloud for vengeance from earth to heaven. Let us then strenuously endeavor to make what amends we can. Let us, in opposition to the many outrages which Jesus Christ has endured, and does still endure, in the Blessed Sacrament, frequently, on this day and during the octave, testify to him our love and our gratitude.

Yes, O my most sweet and loving Jesus! with sentiments of profound and humble adoration, I present myself before thee, and salute thee, my God, my Redeemer, my all! Oh! when will thy sufferings be at an end! When will men love thee, as they ought! Jesus, God of all goodness and mercy! "What have I in heaven? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever." Begone, then, from my heart, all earthly affections; and come, sweet flames of divine love; come, and consume me, for the sake of that God of love, who has been pleased to die for love of me. Thou hast given me, O divine Jesus! all that thou hast: behold, I give and consecrate myself to thee and to thy service, both now and for all eternity.

Sermon LXX.

Festival of SS. Peter and Paul.

ST. PETER'S DENIAL.

And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, as he had said: Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.—Luke xxii. 61.

The fall of Peter is perhaps the most instructive portion of his history. Were I to attempt his panegyric, the most simple description of his virtues, of his lively faith, ardent zeal, and generous charity, while it offered much to your admiration, would, I fear, fail of rousing you to emulation. Little or nothing of what I should say could be brought home to your bosoms. Therefore, passing by his singular privileges, his heroic achievements, and his glorious martyrdom, we will contemplate the Saint, in that one incident of his life, in which he appears on a level with ourselves. Not without reason are the failings and crimes of illustrious characters recorded in Scripture. They are intended to teach us caution and humility. When we reflect that the dangers which beset us have overcome saints, how can we be careless? when we recollect that Solomon, and David, and Peter fell, how can we listen to the whispers of pride? They also administer consolation. If only the bright side of these exalted characters had been presented to our view, and all their failings concealed, we should have been discouraged; we might have been plunged into despair. But, when we see that they were men, subject to the same infirmities and passions as ourselves, we feel emboldened to tread courageously in their footsteps, and are nerved to struggle more patiently and more resolutely with our own difficulties. Confining myself, then, to Peter's denial, I will, first, inculcate the lessons which we

should derive from it; secondly, contrast his single fall with our repeated transgressions; and, lastly, offer some remarks on his repentance.

The first instruction furnished by the fall of Peter is, that confidence in ourselves, whenever we begin to feel it, is the first step towards ruin. Throughout the gospel history, we cannot but admire Peter's eager and sincere devotedness to his Master. That this devotedness was really sincere, there is no room for doubt; the praises and the rewards which he received from Jesus Christ are decisive. He could not have applauded and recompensed affected faith and hypocritical zeal. Peter, then, firmly believed, Peter ardently loved his Saviour. And, on our first perusal of his story, when we hear him claiming for himself the palm of superior courage, indignantly resenting to be classed with the other apostles about to deny their Lord, and promising that he will follow him to prison and to death, and especially when we see him interpose his single sword between his master and a multitude of armed men, all our feelings are engaged in his favor, we admire his firmness, seem to partake of his zeal, and, in spite of the prophecy, can hardly help hoping that his resolution will support him to the end; not considering, that the very confidence which Peter placed in himself was the main source of his misfortune. *He that exalteth himself shall be humbled. Let him who glorieth, glory in the Lord.* If real ground for self-confidence ever existed, it existed in Peter; yet, no sooner does Peter confide in himself, than he falls, and falls as much below the other apostles as he had boastingly raised himself above them. They in their weakness desert: Peter, with all his reputed strength, denies his Master. Would you, my brethren, avoid similar abasement? Beware of preferring yourselves to others, even to those who are apparently the most debased. Do you wish to overcome the temptations and passions which assault you? Rest not your hopes of conquest on your own past fidelity or present strength, but place all your dependence on God. *Unless the Lord keep the city, he watcheth in vain that keepeth it.* Without the help of God's grace, weak are our strongest resolutions, unavailing our most vigorous efforts. This grace cannot be secured but by humility and self-diffidence; *for God resisteth*

the proud, but giveth his grace to the humble. This grace can be obtained only by fervent and persevering prayer.

Christ, who had warned Peter of his approaching fall, had also pointed out the means by which it might have been avoided. These Peter neglected. With the example of his Saviour before his eyes, and that solemn injunction sounding in his ears, *Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation*, he weakly yielded to the inclinations of nature, and gave to slumber those precious moments in which he should have been fortifying himself for his coming trial. The grace, for which he had not asked, he of course did not receive: and being destitute of grace, he was powerless to withstand the feeblest enemy. Oh, how frequently might we trace our own transgressions to a similar cause! Is there to be found a slave to any vice, who has prayed as he ought for the strength requisite to enable him to burst the chains that fetter him in shameful bondage? Among the just, is there any habitual failing to which they are subject, that might not be conquered by greater earnestness in prayer? I am convinced there is not. *Ask, and you shall receive*, is the broad promise of Truth himself, applicable to all our desires, all our necessities, all our miseries. Do you then feel conscious of something wrong in yourself, which you desire to rectify,—do you dread the approach of certain temptations, to which you have generally yielded,—are you looking forward with anxiety to some untried struggle, through which you must pass? Watch in prayer. In humble, fervent, persevering supplications, implore the gracious assistance of the Almighty; and, rest assured, the desire of your heart shall be granted you; your old enemies, though long accustomed to victory, shall sink into infantine weakness in your presence; and any fresh foe, who may venture an assault, shall only furnish you with the opportunity of a fresh triumph.

Peter, as we have seen, confided in himself; he also, as we have seen, neglected the preservatives recommended to him; still, he possibly might not have fallen, if he had not rashly exposed himself to danger. Had he fled with the rest, he might have shared with them the charge of cowardice; he could hardly have incurred the guilt and perfidy of his denial. But he ventured into the company of Christ's enemies, listened to their

discourse, entered perhaps partially into some of their feelings, and continued, even after he must have perceived the danger, to trust himself to it, till at length he averred upon oath that he had never known the man. What an example! How cautiously ought we to shun dangerous occasions, when we see this prince of the apostles, to whom the heavenly Father had himself revealed the divinity of his son, and for the steadfastness of whose faith Jesus himself had prayed, thus basely disowning the Saviour, whom he so ardently loved! Were you as strong as Peter, if you loved the danger, you would perish in it. You are weaker than Peter; be so much the more cautious. You have had repeated experience, which Peter never had, of the ill effects which follow from certain liberties which you allow yourselves, from that company which you frequent, from those indulgences with which you might dispense without injury to your health. If you again venture into the snare, the consequence is no longer your misfortune, but your choice; your past experience leaves you without excuse. The burnt child ought to dread the fire. If, in spite of experience, you dally with what you know to be dangerous to your virtue, not only are you sure to fall, but you are prepared to fall, and even desirous of falling. A secret affection for the sin itself must reign in your bosom. Only hate sin as it deserves to be hated, love God as he ought to be loved, have that care for your salvation which its importance demands, and you will abhor whatever is connected with sin; you will keep cautiously aloof from whatever would lead to sin.

Great, beyond doubt, was Peter's guilt, nor have I any design of extenuating it; and yet I think we can draw from it no apology for our own. On the contrary, we shall, on examination, discover in his crime four palliating circumstances, which we can seldom plead; so that a comparison between Peter sinning and ourselves as sinners, will be greatly to our disadvantage.

When Peter fell, he was under a strong impression of fear and disappointment. He had witnessed, on several occasions, those exertions of Divine power, by which his Master had delivered himself from imminent dangers. By the continued exercise of this power, he confided that Jesus would ultimately

triumph over all his enemies, and establish himself in that temporal sovereignty, in which he and the other apostles expected to share. But his prospect of temporal power and dominion was now suddenly clouded. His expected sovereign was a prisoner in the hands of his foes, had been hurried away as a criminal to the hall of the high-priest, and had there met with such outrages and execrations from the people, as left no room for doubt, both that the popularity which he once enjoyed was utterly lost, and that the trial which he was about to undergo would end in his execution. Intimidated by the awful parade of justice, and dreading to be known for a disciple of Jesus, lest he should share in his punishment, when the question was put to him, he denied his Master. It cannot be doubted that fear and disappointment dictated his reply. Can we ever plead the same excuse? We are certainly laboring under no disappointment. The idea of a crucified Saviour is grown familiar. We never expected him to appear in any worldly glory. Neither does the practice of our religion expose us to danger. There was, indeed, a time when the rack and the gibbet awaited the professors of Christianity: and if the hearts of some of the confessors fainted under the terrors which threatened them, they might plead that a similar dread had overcome the boldest of the apostolic college. But, in these days, our fears are no longer worked upon. We are never called to suffer extremities for the gospel, and yet we are continually denying our Lord and Master. Every sin that we commit is a denial of Christ. And what impels us to sin? Not the dread of torture or of a violent death; but generally, the prospect of some paltry evanescent gratification.

I observe, too, that Peter, when he fell, was taken by surprise. His disappointment and fear, though great, might have been insufficient to overpower him, could he have found time for recollection. But, in the gloomy scene in which he was placed, the temptation fell upon him unexpectedly; and, though his denial was repeated thrice, yet each succeeding denial was only a confirmation of the foregoing. Time for deliberate reflection, whether it would or would not have rescued him, certainly was not allowed. There are, indeed, occasions, on which we also can truly allege the same excuse. We may sometimes have been

surprised into sin; but this is not generally the case. Day after day, and week after week, you foster ill-will and malice in your heart. The injury which you have received is allowed to rankle in your memory, till the very sight of the man who has injured you, becomes insupportable. You neglect the sacraments, you spurn the precepts of the Church; the days which she appoints to be kept holy, you devote to your ordinary business; the Sabbath itself is spent in idle conversation and useless or criminal diversions. You have contracted a habit of profane swearing, from which, exhortations and reproofs, the terrors of futurity unfolded to your view, and the sacred tribunal of penance itself have been unable to deter you. Are these sins the effect of surprise? If they are not, if you commit these sins deliberately, frequently, and with your eyes open, great is the difference between your sins and the sin of Peter. His fall was attributable to the frailty of human nature; your falls result from depravity of heart.

I may remark, in the third place, that Peter denied Christ in word only. He was never impelled to act against his Saviour. Now, St. James tells us, that *if any one offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.* From which we may conclude, that in general, a sin committed in speech is attended with less criminality than a sin carried out into action. The former commonly bespeaks much less depravity than the latter. Thus, Peter's denial of Christ in a few hesitating words is excusable, when compared with that guilt which is involved in the denial of Christ by a wicked life. Ought the glutton, the drunkard, and the man of lust to imagine, that because they profess Christianity, they are guiltless of denying Christ? No! every criminal indulgence cries out, in language louder than Peter's, *I know not the man.* The passionate man, whose turbulence of temper renders him the dread of his household; the fraudulent trader, who never fails to take advantage of the simplicity and credulity of his customers; the sacrilegious wretch, who, being unprepared to renounce his evil custom, neglects to confess it, and approaches habitually to partake of the body and blood of the Lord, with known unworthiness;—can these, and such as these, flatter themselves that, because they continue to bear the Christian name, they are not deniers of Christ? Alas! in the whole course of their ac-

tions, in their whole lives, they are continually exclaiming, "What is Christ to us? we *know not the man.*" There are also in the world many professing Christians, who are not addicted to any grossly criminal habit, but whose thoughts and attention are wholly engaged in business or in pleasure, and who live almost as if they disbelieved the futurity to which they are approaching and the God by whom they are to be judged. Can these suppose they have any connection with Jesus? Their own hearts must tell them that they *know not the man.* Therefore, while we lament the denial of Peter, let us carefully examine our own consciences, lest we be found, in the sight of God, not merely to equal, but to exceed his guilt.

If Peter's sin furnishes us with so much matter for shame and self-condemnation, what shall we say of his prompt, his efficacious, his persevering repentance? His repentance was prompt: one single glance from that divine Master whom he had just disowned, was sufficient to bring him to himself, to impress his mind with a full sense of his baseness, and to rekindle all those ardors of generous love, which heretofore had burned in his bosom. Had he neglected this grace, he might, like Judas, have fallen to rise no more. But have we never resisted similar graces? After the commission of sin, when conscience has attempted to raise her plaintive voice, have you not stifled her cries? When you have once forsaken the narrow path of virtue, have you not persisted in your devious course, in spite of the strongest remonstrances, and of the most loving entreaties, by which the good Shepherd strove to recall your wandering steps? Even now, is there no one before me, to whose heart Jesus is speaking from this altar, and who turns a deaf ear to his sweet invitation?

The repentance of Peter was efficacious. Without losing a moment, he withdrew from the wicked company into which he had rashly ventured: he instantly forsook the occasion of his sin. A flood of tears attested the poignancy of his grief. Humbled and abashed, he leaves to a brother apostle the mournful but honorable office of attending his Saviour in his last moments, and continues to bewail his perfidy in silence and solitude, till the joyous tidings of Christ's resurrection call him again into active service. Such, if we truly repented, should

we be in our penitence; so ready to quit whatever is calculated to produce a relapse; so penetrated with sorrow, when our past sins rise up in our remembrance; so willing to give the preference to others, through a deep consciousness of our own debasement; and so content to live in humble seclusion, as affording us the best opportunity of lamenting our disorders and imploring forgiveness.

Finally, Peter's repentance was persevering. The tears which he began to shed on the very night which witnessed his denial, continued to flow to the very end of his life: so that, in his old age, his withered cheeks are said to have been evidently furrowed with the channels which the waters of compunction had worn. He, who had disowned his Lord at the voice of a servant, thenceforth boldly confessed him before magistrates and kings, before judges and emperors. He, who in the hall of the Jewish high-priest had trembled, lest he should be recognised as a disciple of Jesus, from that time forth professed himself his apostle, and undauntedly announced his doctrines, not only to the enslaved Jews, but to the stern plebeians, the haughty warriors, the princely senators, and the self-conceited philosophers of Rome. He, who had been afraid of suffering with Jesus, now glories in being thought worthy to suffer for his name's sake, and is never fully contented, till condemned to the very death which his Saviour underwent. When we repent, or appear to repent, do similar results follow our repentance? Is the transgression, which we bewail and confess, never repeated? Is the bare remembrance of our guilt sufficient to renew our tears and revive all our griefs? Or, when we have once confessed the sin, do we dismiss it from our minds as a thing with which we have no further connection? Do we become conspicuous for the virtues opposite to the vices, which in the holy tribunal we promised to renounce? Is the unjust man careful to heal the wounds of injustice with the balm of restitution? Is that mouth, from which curses and imprecations have so often been heard, now noted for the Christian decorum and charity of its language? Does the passionate man now edify, by patience and meekness, those whom he scandalized by anger? You have been heard to speak detractingly, perhaps calumniously, of your neighbor: is it equally evident that

you have restored the good name which you had blasted, and now regulate all your conversation by the laws of charity? You have been seen reduced to the level of the brute by ebriety: are you now remarkable for the temperance of your habits? If truth obliges you to answer these questions in the negative, you have not repented as Peter repented, and you have reason to fear that you have not yet appeased your insulted God.

Thou, whose justice is always the same,—Thou, who for our instruction didst inspire thine Evangelists to narrate the fall and the repentance of Peter, grant, in the plenitude of thy mercies, that the lessons which we have this day received may sink deep into our hearts; may move us to caution, vigilance, and humility; and may, above all, excite in us that salutary fear, which is the beginning of wisdom. And thou, O illustrious apostle, whose very fall has been thus instructive and edifying to us, who art never better honored than by the imitation of thy penitence, present, we beseech thee, this our prayer before the Most High, recommend it by thy powerful intercession, and obtain for us, through Jesus Christ, our common Redeemer, what we do not deserve to obtain on our own account.

Sermon LX.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin.

ON THE FESTIVAL.

Mary is taken up into heaven; the angels rejoice; praising they bless the Lord.

Such are the words with which the Church introduces the office of this day. Having reviewed, on the other festivals of the Mother of God, the several wonders which the divine wisdom was pleased to work in this most distinguished of pure creatures, from the day of her conception to that, when, standing beneath the cross of her Son, she felt through her heart the keen piercings of that sword of grief predicted by holy Simeon, we are now called on to follow her beyond the limits of this terrestrial vale, and to view the confirmation of all her privileges, her enthronement in a kingdom where sorrow never enters and joys never end. *Mary is taken up into heaven; the angels rejoice; praising they bless the Lord.* Now, though the present might be termed a festival of heaven rather than of earth, a solemnity more worthy of the spirits of the just made perfect in eternal glory, than of the wretched sojourners in a land of exile, yet, as the Church militant is not less a part of the kingdom of God than the Church triumphant, and as she, who is the object of our contemplation, is equally Queen of the Saints who are yet detained in this earthly banishment, as of those who enjoy her society in the realms of bliss, it is incumbent on *us* also to join our feeble voices to the loud canticles of jubilation, which on this day resound through the courts of heaven. Hence, the Church again sings: *Let us all rejoice in the Lord, celebrating a festival day, in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, at whose Assumption angels rejoice, and praise*

together the Son of God. In accordance with this just invitation, it shall be my object to offer a few reflections on the subject of Mary's merit, and Mary's glory; and, secondly, to deduce therefrom the titles which she has to our devotion, our confidence, and our love.

The crown of beatitude is termed, by St. Paul, a crown of justice; that is to say, God, in the distribution of his eternal rewards, proportions them to each one's previous merit, and to his degree of correspondence with the graces with which he has been favored. Hence that important moral truth, that every instant of time is in some sense worth an eternity; because, in every fugitive instant may be purchased a new degree of eternal happiness: and hence also it is, that no distinction can be found among the saints in heavèn, no pre-eminence of glory, or degree of fruition, which has not first been merited and determined during their sojournment here. Earth, then, decides the destinies of heaven; the present is the index of the future; time the criterion of eternity. Such, my brethren, is the rule by which we are to judge of Mary's glory. To know what she is in heaven, we must first ask what she was on earth. And here, what a ravishing spectacle at once presents itself to our view! Selected from eternity to be, for nine months, the habitation of the God of holiness, to carry him in her arms, to feed him at her breast, to watch over him, to have him obedient and subject to her, we rationally anticipate, that she will be adorned with supereminent sanctity. The Almighty Father deputes to her one of the first of his heavenly messengers. Admiring the plenitude of blessings with which Mary was honored, the archangel salutes her with deference and respect. *Hail, full of grace.* Yes! celestial spirit, the graces and the glory, with which thou thyself art adorned are indeed great; but greater are the graces and the glory of her to whom thou comest. God the Father sends to her the first of his heavenly ambassadors. The Holy Ghost overshadows her. The Son dwells within her. *Hail, full of grace.* And shall, my brethren, this superabundance of celestial gifts fail to produce corresponding effects? No! Clothed from her first conception with the beauteous robe of primeval innocence, a robe which she of all the daughters of Adam was privileged to wear, she appears, as the

sacred penman describes her, a lily among thorns. *As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.* The brightness of that robe she never sullied. Placed in a world filled with sin, she ever preserved her heart and body undefiled by the general contagion. Yes! Mary alone was found worthy to bring forth the Author of Sanctity, because Mary alone was found without sin. "Blessed indeed in this," says Venerable Bede, "because she was made the temporal instrument of the Word's incarnation; but far more blessed, because she continued the eternal keeper of his love." From the first dawn of her reason, Mary's every action breathed a spirit of the most ardent charity; incessantly did the celestial flame burn with increasing ardor in her breast; incessantly did it impel her to a nearer approximation to the source of love, till its intensity, at last, burnt the mortal tie, and left her pure soul at liberty to follow the full impulse of the power by which it was borne along. Other saints have loved God; others have spent their lives in the heroic exercises of charity. Mary, raised above angels and archangels, above the highest powers of heaven, in the temporal relationship which she bore to the Son of God, stands also pre-eminently distinguished over them, in the mystic union of her more than seraphic affection.

After her innocence and her charity, view next her humility. Raised to an elevation which overwhelms with astonishment the highest and most enlightened intelligences of heaven, she assumes no other title than that of *the handmaid of the Lord.* Privileges, glories, revelations, all are buried in the deepest silence. Cherishing the treasure, which was to make earth and heaven rejoice, she appropriates to herself no distinction above the lowliest of the daughters of Judea. Her love of the cross and of holy abjection made her prefer to pass for a sinner, even in the eyes of her chaste spouse, rather than to announce to him her own exaltation. Even when the voice of inspiration speaks through her lips, and makes known to Elizabeth the secret of her future dignity, she is careful to mingle with the prophetic sounds the declaration of her own nothingness, and to render to God the glory of all things. *My soul,* she says, *doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because he hath regarded the humility of his handmaid.* The same

spirit of self-abasement made her continue in obscurity and retirement, during the splendid prodigies of her Son's ministry: while she again appears amid the ignominies of his passion, seeming to be his mother, only to share in his sorrows and partake of his humiliations. Hence that double martyrdom, which her heroic soul there embraced and suffered; since, as St. Bernard remarks, the sword of grief could not have reached his heart, if it had not first passed through hers.

Name the other virtue which you would see exemplified, and you shall behold its most perfect form in this mirror of perfection. Is it purity? The presence of an angel from heaven alarms her chaste soul. Rather than forego her virginity, she would forego her maternity; she would rather be a virgin, than mother of God. *How shall this be done, because I know not man?* Is it obedience? Behold her in her purification. Though she could have justly pleaded exemption from the law, for she was undefiled, yet would she observe it in its minutest details. However much the delay cost her piety, she would not approach the precincts of the holy place, till the days of her purification were fulfilled. Is it resignation to the will of heaven? View her at the foot of the cross; compare her situation there, with that in which we have been contemplating her; contrast the promises which had been once made her, with the appearances which she there beholds; the words of the angel, declaring that she should be the mother of God, with those of her Son, bidding her be the mother of his disciple; and say, if the imagination of man could conceive a trial more severe. Yet, not a complaint, not a murmur, while, in calm and silent resignation, she adores the dispensation of heaven.

But why dwell on the particular virtues which conspire to form the character of Mary? Every virtue in the most perfect degree adorns the heart of this most holy Virgin. God himself exerts his omnipotence in enlarging and filling its capacities. About to become the habitation of sanctity itself, the temple of a God made man, she is favored by anticipation with all that plenitude of grace and of sanctity of which a created being is susceptible. *The Lord*, says the Psalmist, *hath sanctified his temple.*

Such, my brethren, being the virtues, such the elevation of

Mary on earth, can we be surprised at the spectacle which we are this day called on to contemplate in heaven?—that God, who *exalteth the humble*, should seem even to exhaust the riches of his bounty in favor of her, who, being the most dignified, looked upon herself as the most lowly of all creatures?—that she, whose mind and heart were ever most perfectly fixed on God in time, should enjoy the clearest vision, the nearest, the fullest participation of him during eternity?

The highest and most enlightened spirits of heaven are struck with astonishment at Mary's exaltation. Though incessantly occupied in contemplating the divine immensity and perfections, they had yet formed no conception of a creature gifted and perfected like her, who is this day enthroned as Queen of Heaven. Redoubling their hosannas, they ask in admiration, *Who is she, that cometh like the rising morn, beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array?* Then, as if unable to satiate themselves with the contemplation of this new display of the divine power, they continue to exclaim, *Return, return, O Sunamitis: return, return, that we may behold thee.* Mounting, thus, through the choir of the blessed, placed above angels and archangels, and inferior only to her divine Son, she forms a new order in the celestial hierarchy, a new link between finite and infinite; and, though still a created and dependent being, she possesses a name which raises her as far above all other creatures as the name of mother excels that of servant or of friend.

From the eminent virtues which Mary practised upon earth,—from the height of glory which she has attained in heaven, judge, fellow-christians, of the claims which she possesses to our devotion, confidence, and love. She was the channel through which the great Source of all our good first flowed among us; she is still the channel through which the earth is fertilized and enriched by the graces of heaven. Yes! if Mary be the mother of God, she is also the mother of men. The former title was announced to her by the angel; her own divine Son himself gave her the latter. *Woman*, said he to her, while he hung upon the cross, *Woman, behold thy son.* This recommendation of all his followers, in the person of St. John, to her maternal solicitude, he might have made at another time; but he chose to reserve it for that last and most momentous hour, and to make

of it his dying command, that we might be made fully sensible of all the importance of this reciprocal charge, *Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother.* Vested thus with the character of our parent, and solemnly charged with the care of our welfare, she has ever acted a mother's part. Burning with the most ardent desire of seeing the reign of her divine Son extended over every heart:—of seeing the great work of man's redemption, which was commenced in her womb, produce everywhere its full effect, she leaves nothing undone, to advance our eternal interests. Hence, my dear friends, in all your necessities, in every danger, in every temptation, you cannot do better than invoke the assistance of Mary. That name is a name of encouragement to the pusillanimous, of strength to the weak, of consolation to the afflicted.

Listen to St. Bernard: "O, you who find yourselves tossed in the tempests of this world, turn not your eyes from the brightness of this star, if you would not be overwhelmed by the storm. If the winds of temptation rise,—if you fall among the rocks of tribulation, look up at this star,—call upon Mary. If you are tossed by the waves of pride, ambition, detraction, jealousy, or envy,—look up at the star,—call upon Mary. If anger, covetousness, or lust, beat on the vessel of your soul, look upon Mary. If you begin to sink in the gulf of melancholy and despair, think on Mary. In dangers, in distresses, in perplexities, think on Mary; call on Mary. Let her not depart from your mouth. Let her not depart from your heart. And, that you may obtain the suffrage of her prayers, never deviate from her example. Whilst you follow her, you never go astray; whilst you implore her aid, you never sink in despair; when you think on her, you never wander; under her patronage, you never fail; under her protection, you need not fear; she being your guide, you will not be wearied." In fact, open the histories of the servants of God, view them through all their dangers and temptations, till their happy arrival at the gates of peace: Mary it was who was their protectress; it was Mary whom they honored and invoked; Mary in whom they confided; Mary, whom they devoutly loved.

O great and glorious Queen of Heaven and Earth! we this day congratulate with thee, on thy most glorious triumph; we rejoice to see what thou art, happy in the eternal possession of

Him, who in time was the sovereign object of thy love and desire. Arrived now at the secure port of salvation, forget not thy afflicted children, who are yet exposed to the storms and tempests of this miserable life; who lament and weep in this valley of tears, and claim thy powerful intercession. No! tender Mother, forget not the dying injunction of thy beloved Son. Be a mother to us, dry up our tears, and obtain for us all the grace which we need, to conduct us safe to a participation of thy glorious society, in the region of the blessed.

Sermon LXX.

All Saints.

ON SANCTITY.

After this, I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.—Apoc. vii. 9.

We are invited, on this day, to join the choirs of the blessed, in returning thanks to the Sovereign Goodness, for the benefits which he has conferred on human nature. We are called upon to bless God, for the happiness of our fellow-men, who have consummated their course and obtained their crown. We are invited to behold the recompense of their labors, and are encouraged to hope for a similar reward. When we soar on the wings of faith, and behold the just thronging the eternal courts, each happy in himself, and thrice happy in the society of all that is good, of all that is lovely, we then feel the truth of the divine oracle, that *the labors of this life are momentary and light; and that they work for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.* But we cannot comprehend the joys of heaven; let us, then, confine ourselves to the consideration of the great advantages which sanctity confers on the children of God, even in this life. We will afterwards examine the means by which sanctity is to be attained.

Sanctity is unquestionably the first and fairest ornament of the human character. It is the chosen attribute of the Deity himself; for, in the sacred writings, he is by no epithet so often characterized, as by that of Holy: and in heaven, what is the constant theme of the praises of the blessed? Silent, it would seem, on his other boundless perfections, they incessantly sing:

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth. No wonder, then, that sanctity should, above all other qualities, exalt and beautify the human character on earth. It imparts to it something divine; it clothes it with a dignity and a grace which the heart of man is not made to resist. How powerful is the command which it exercises over our understanding! Even in its less perfect forms, how great is the influence it maintains over our judgment! Characterize a man as prudent, just, or liberal, and you have said that which many can hear with indifference; but let it be seen or felt that he is what we designate by the term *holy*, and there is no human heart so ill formed or so perverted, as not to pay him, in secret at least, the homage of its reverence and admiration. Though there is no excellence which the world has more frequently made the object of its satire and ridicule, there is none to which the world itself has ever paid more signal honours. In sacred history, we read of emperors and kings frequently writing with their own hand to the obscure and humble, but holy inhabitants of the desert, and of princes and nobles visiting them from afar, and accounting it the highest honor to have seen and conversed with them in their inhospitable retreats. Even the lifeless ashes of the holy servants of God have attracted greater crowds than the most splendid courts of the emperors of the earth; and while these, after death, sleep silent and forgotten in their proud mausoleums, the tombs of the holy are thronged with respectful votaries; and the meanest trifle that belonged to them is cherished as a treasure.

These, however, are but their external and superficial advantages, and, in their own estimation, none at all; they possess others much more valuable and solid. To comprise them all in one sentence, they alone have discovered the secret of happiness. This is evident from all their deportment; for, which of the servants of God was ever heard to complain? No, complaint is the language of the sinners of the earth; it is the language of the high and mighty; it is the language of the rich and the fortunate of this world; but there ever resounds, according to the expression of the Psalmist, *the voice of jubilee and joy in the tabernacles of the just.* It is remarkable, that they were never heard to complain. They complained not of God: all his dispensations, even when apparently severe, were

welcome, and even delightful to them. They complained not of those about them; they sincerely rejoiced in their advantages, and compassionated and bore in silence their defects; they complained not of themselves,—except in one point, that they did not love God as they ought: in every thing else, they were calm and satisfied. They were satisfied with their condition in life, even though it were the meanest; they were satisfied with their share of health, of bodily advantages, of natural talents, however limited; in all these respects they had no wishes! They were free from desires, and consequently from torment. Even in sickness, in pain, in contradiction, in persecution, we still see them calm, resigned, and cheerful; they were at their ease, because they were in the hands of their God. In fact, in every circumstance of life they were well, because they were as God would have them to be. And then, how happy were they in their communications with God! How strong, how peculiar must have been the delight which they felt, when it could make them forget the loudest calls of nature, and, with ease and pleasure, dedicate entire nights to prayer and contemplation! What must have been the charm they felt in the company of God, which could make them so indifferent to the pleasures of society, which could make then always sigh for seclusion, and could render any situation on the earth, even the most rugged and inhospitable, acceptable to them, provided it only furnished them with solitude and God! Ah! there is no room here for delusion and infatuation: men so singular must have had singular satisfaction; they must have been acquainted with something far above the relish and the experience of ordinary men. Many of them have declared, and strongly attested to us, that they would not give in exchange the smallest portion of what they felt in God, for all the pleasures of the world. No wonder, after this, that we see them not only not coveting, but even loathing, all the joys of life; seeking nothing in this world but its asperities and its privations; and only looking forward to, and sighing after death. Yes, this is the most extraordinary feature in their earthly career, and the peculiar privilege and triumph of sanctity. That awful event, which is counted, and is in fact the most dreadful of natural evils,—from which all the sons of Adam turn with such alarm; at which the hero shudders, and

the moral sage, with all his wisdom, falters,—this dreaded event was to them an object, not only not of fear, but of hope always, and often of desire. We see all of them waiting for it with tranquillity, and viewing it as the commencement of their bliss; and many of them even longing for it, hailing its approach with transport, and singing canticles of joy at their departure. Ah! my friends, can we possibly doubt for a moment where true wisdom lies? No; assuredly, these alone were truly wise and truly happy men. Whoever has not yet formed this practical judgment, is himself a stranger to the first lesson of true wisdom: however talented or admired he may be, he is unquestionably still a child of folly.

Who would not, on contemplating the happiness of the saints even in this life, willingly take their condition for his own? And, behold, he has it in his power, if he only wills it in earnest. God offers us, if we please, all the advantages of his saints. In fact, it is, I may say, his only desire, in our regard, that we should all be saints; and he, whose desires are never mere wishes, has furnished us with every requisite. This is another interesting consideration, which we should make on this festival. Each one best knows what private and personal advantages he has received from God for his happy purpose; but what visible and general advantages are there possessed by the servants of God, which each one of us has not at command? They began their happy career by desires: *for the beginning of wisdom*, says the Wise Man, *is the true desire of it.* And is there any thing so easy for us as to desire, incited as we are by such incomparable advantages? They fed their desires by reading and reflection, and cannot we do as much? How much time, how many opportunities, have we for this purpose! There are thousands, probably, in the world, who, had they the advantages which we have in this respect, would one day be ranked in the sacred calendar. The saints followed up their reflection by fervent prayer; and is not prayer open and easy to us all? Is there any one in want, that knows not how to ask? There is a difference, indeed, in the way of asking; but this difference itself is in our hands; and if we were only careful to pray as the saints did, with that attention, that ardor, and that perseverance, we should soon find ourselves in the track of their

blessed footsteps. Let this be well attended to; for it is, indeed, the capital point. Genuine prayer is the key of sanctity; and he who has found it is master of the prize. With prayer the saints co-operated by their own exertions: for surely some part of so great a work must be our own; we must labor in our own cause. They denied their own will; they subdued their passions; they labored daily and assiduously at the painful but salutary task, and by this holy violence they secured the prize. Ah! here is the main difficulty; were sanctity and its supereminent advantages to be purchased by desires and prayers, the glorious character would not be so rare; but *the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence*, and *the violent*, says our divine Redeemer, *bear it away*. We desire, and we pray, to be holy; but when called upon to put our hand to the work, we stand timid and irresolute; though convinced that, before we can partake of the temporal or the eternal advantages of sanctity, we must practise the virtues by which the saints were distinguished from the rest of mankind. Let us examine more minutely what these were.

The first virtue which characterized all the servants of God was *mortification*. With original sin, we have all inherited, from our common parent, a strong repugnance to virtue, an impetuous inclination to vice. Mortification, my brethren, consists in checking the impetuosity and deadening the activity of these evil propensities; and, to convince yourselves in how heroic a degree this virtue was practised by the saints, you have only to peruse their edifying lives; you will there find numbers, who, renouncing all temporal possessions and comforts, and retiring from the world, passed their days in deserts, making it an invariable rule never to allow their bodies any thing, that was not strictly necessary for their support; their diet, herbs and pulse; their beverage, water; their couch, the cold earth. Their fasts and prayers appear incredible; no refreshment alleviated the cravings of thirst and hunger till the evening twilight; and even then, it was but a scanty pittance. These fasts did not continue for forty days only; no, in the round of the year, you would probably not find forty days exempt from such austerities. You will find others, whose duties required them to mingle in society, displaying their pious ingenuity in the in-

vention of a thousand means of afflicting their bodies. If they were necessitated, during the day, to attend to the duties of their station, they had at least the night to themselves. They could here indulge their pious zeal at pleasure. How welcome is nightly repose, after the heavy labors of the day! and how galling to deny the body this refreshment! What, then, must be your idea of the glorious Francis Xavier, who, when he could no longer lift his feeble arm to pour the water of regeneration over converted infidels, retired at night to some lonely cave or wood, to pour out his soul in prayers and tears, for the perseverance of his proselytes and the conversion of their still idolatrous countrymen? Of St. Ignatius, Francis Regis, and Vincent of Paul, who, after the hardships of the day, were found consoling, instructing, and encouraging the repentant sinner, in the tribunal of confession, or breathing hope and comfort into the afflicted bosoms of their expiring brethren in the hospitals? But corporal austerities, of themselves, do not confer sanctity; and, to whatever extent they may have been carried by the saints, they were only preparatory to that interior penance, which was to immolate self-love and all its darling offspring. It is on this point that you will in vain look, among the admired votaries of the world, for imitators of the saints. Corporal mortifications the most severe are endured daily by profligate sinners, for the purpose of gratifying their favourite passions. In all ages and countries, we read of ambition and vanity impelling men to undergo the most oppressive hardships for the acquisition of some badge of honor or some extent of authority; but to be interiorly mortified and truly to subdue themselves, is an honor peculiar to the saints. Indeed, this internal death, this martyrdom of all the evil inclinations of the soul, is above the natural power of humanity. It requires a strong grace on the part of God, and steady co-operation on the part of man.

The unremitting practice of this virtue of mortification, as it regards the evil inclinations of both soul and body, prepared the saints for the characteristic virtue of our divine Redeemer, *humility*. Humility is the child of self-knowledge; and where is the unmortified man that knows himself? But he who earnestly endeavors to reduce his evil inclinations to the dominion

of reason and the law of God, will not proceed far before he discovers what a perverse, what a miserable creature he is. He will soon learn, that he may claim nothing as his own but sin. Sincerely to convince ourselves of this, and to act upon the conviction, is, with the saints, to exercise the virtue of humility, that lovely ornament of the Christian character, which instantly wins the heart, and is respected even by the children of pride. If the saints were amiable and great in the eyes of God, it was because they were mean and little in their own. Their desires of becoming humble were not barren. In continual supplications they begged that the Almighty would bestow upon them this grace, which was to give them a real, though distant resemblance to their Redeemer. As their prayers proceeded from a sincere heart, they were heard: not that this virtue was always in a miraculous manner infused into their souls; but they at least received from the hands of God abundant means of humiliation, and powerful graces to support them in the trial. Sometimes, they were oppressed by temporal calamities; at others, they were ill-treated, despised, and ridiculed, even by those from whom they might have naturally expected comfort and respect. They were fully aware that when they prayed for this virtue, they prayed in reality for humiliations: hence you easily remark, in the history of their holy lives, that they rejoiced at being overlooked and treated with contempt. Ah! my brethren, what severe conflicts must the saints have gone through, to arrive at this perfect state of virtue! The bitterness, however, of humiliations was corrected by the remembrance of the glorious reward which awaited them in another world; and now, seated on their eternal thrones, they have verified that sentence which was their consolation in life, *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

To these virtues of mortification and humility, the saints added an ardent *love of God.* Having detached their hearts from the things of this world by mortification, they naturally turned to that amiable Being, for the enjoyment of whom alone they were created. In directing their affections to him, they soon perceived that they had discovered the source of all true happiness. Hence, we need not be surprised at their insensibility to earthly pleasures, and to find them seizing every opportunity

to pour out their souls in acts of praise and thanksgiving. As they truly loved God, it was but natural that they should find a peculiar delight, not to be expressed by any language, in serving and conversing with their beloved, in contemplating and admiring his infinitely charming perfections. Indeed, prayer and communion with their Creator constituted the only joy they knew: a joy which they could indulge to the full extent of their desires; a pleasure, which increased by fruition; which contained no mixture of alloy, and of which, they knew, neither earth nor hell could deprive them. If they were undervalued and despised by men, they had a friend in heaven, who loved, cherished, and consoled them. If their charitable labors met with ill treatment and ingratitude, they had one who would richly recompense them for all their exertions. If their zeal rendered them the objects of public hatred and persecution; if they were deserted by friends, and branded with infamy by enemies; they raised their eyes to heaven, where they found a true defender of their cause, and under the shield of his divine protection, they could look down with calm defiance on the storms and hurricanes that raged below. It was this divine love, which took away the terrors of that moment, the very thought of which is sufficient to mar all sublunary pleasures. At the approach of that awful hour which was to number them among the inhabitants of another world, the powerful effects of divine charity were displayed in all their splendor. What peace, what joy, what serenity beamed on their heavenly countenances! With what seraphic raptures could they repeat, *We rejoice at the things that are said to us; we shall go into the house of the Lord.* The most abandoned sinner could not view such a death, without an emotion of reverential awe, and a secret wish that he also might die the death of the saints. But, as a man lives, so shall he die. Only he will die the death of a saint who has lived the life of a saint: or, in other words, who has lived mortified and humble, and has loved God above all things. The practice of these virtues is not merely a means of rendering our salvation more secure; it is the only condition on which heaven is promised to us. Far be it from me, however, to insinuate that any one will be excluded from that happy abode for not having arrived at that sublime perfection which many of the

saints attained. God, in his wisdom, has destined some to a higher degree of sanctity than others; and though he distributes his graces to all abundantly, there are some choice individuals, on whom he bestows peculiar favors. But, at what degree of perfection are we obliged to aim, in the practice of these virtues? First, with regard to external humility and mortification, let each listen to the voice of God, speaking to him in the person of his spiritual guide. In the second place, with regard to interior humility, the mortification of the evil affections of the soul, and the love of God, the answer has already been given by Jesus Christ: *Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* Our Redeemer, by this mysterious sentence, would not surely mean, that we were to become literally as perfect as his heavenly Father. And yet, this strong expression would not have been uttered without an adequate reason. By thus proposing the infinitely perfect Deity as our model, he would impress upon our minds our duty of always aiming at perfection. Never, then, think, that you are sufficiently perfect. As you do not know to what degree of glory God has destined you, it is your interest and your duty to aim at the highest.

Is the undertaking arduous? Are our difficulties many and great? I will neither dispute nor disguise the truth. But let us, now at least, assume courage from the innumerable bright examples of this day. All the saints had to accomplish the same task as ourselves: many of them had far greater difficulties to surmount than we have. Difficulties of fortune: many of them had to work out their salvation under the pressure of want, the hardships of slavery, the toils of a life of labor, and the distractions of business: yet, among so many obstacles, they found means and leisure, not only to carry on the work of virtue, but to push it to its last perfection. Difficulties of disposition: many of the saints had hard and stubborn natures to work upon: an untoward will, a wayward imagination, a fickle humor, and an irascible temper: yet, by divine grace, with their own constant efforts and persevering patience, they contrived to raise, on a foundation so unpromising, a noble edifice of sanctity, glorious to God and lovely to man. Difficulties of conscience: not a few among them were once immersed in the gulf of sin, and entangled in the strongest habits of vice: yet,

by faithfully corresponding with divine grace, they rose superior to all their impediments, broke the riveted chains of habit, drew from their very errors new incentives to their fervor, and, straining all their surviving vigor in the race, often bore away the palm of superior sanctity, even from the innocent. And cannot we, my friends, do as much? We can; and assuredly we are our own greatest enemies, if we do not, from this very day, commence the noble enterprise. It is our only happiness: it is the sum of all our duties. God himself invites and presses us to it. He furnishes us with every means and facility for it,—his graces, his inspirations, his word, his sacraments. His saints have walked before us, and set us the most perfect, the most practicable models, in every profession, in every condition, in every circumstance of life. They look down upon our labors, they assist us with their prayers, they cheer us with their congratulations, and have only one single wish, beyond their present happiness,—that we should join them in their glory.

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

On the Necessity of an Instructive Church and its Distinctive Character.

BRETHREN—

Christianity being coeval with creation, is as old as the world. It consists in a vital conception of a creative God, who, instituting laws for the universe, condescended to obey them; consistent with which he manifested himself to humanity from the beginning, in a triune character of Creator, Lawmaker, and Redeemer. From the origin of time, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to Jesus Christ, there have always lived men conformable to this conception, this idea of the existence of Deity. Thrice before the Advent of Jesus Christ, God revealed himself to man in his triple character; through the agency of Adam, the first father of the human race; through Noah, second progenitor of mankind, and through Moses, the first great teacher of a people, which people represented the destinies of humanity. Christ is the creator of Christianity, and its predominance has been preserved, through his preaching, these eighteen hundred years. He was the first to enlighten the world: according to St. John, *The light shineth in darkness.* (Gospel, i. 5.) Christianity existed, but was obscure, before the coming of Christ. Whence the cause of its victories since his appearance upon earth? How happeneth it Christianity previous to the presence of its Founder did not prevent the nations from walking in their own ways—(Acts xiv. 15)—but when he arrived, asserted his

eternal victory?—in his own words, *In mundo pressuram habebitis, sed confidite, ego vici mundum.* "In the world you shall have distress; but have confidence, I have overcome the world."

Let us inquire what Christ did accomplish, what man could not effect. Was it the sacrifice on Calvary? The Lamb whose blood blotteth out the sins of the world, had been slain from the beginning, as St. John attests in his Book of Visions. (Apocalypse xiii. 8.) Was it the Gospel? But that is His own word, which mysteriously permitted the world to remain almost unchanged. Was it the sacraments? They are no more than the channels of grace, which, although before the time of our Saviour were less diffused, had never ceased to be extended to man. Then, what did Jesus Christ achieve which man could not perform?—or, by what means perpetuate his victory gained at Calvary? Hearken to His voice, for He will tell you: "*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" (St. Matthew xvi. 18.)

Such the work destined to vanquish hell and the world for ever; destined to renew the sacrifice of the Saviour and promulgate his words by the distribution of grace:

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH. (St. Paul, 1st Epistle to Timothy, iii. 15.)

Let us meditate upon the transcendent glory of this work, and from this day dedicate our minds to the majesty of this vast subject of meditation. Be mine the humble endeavor to explain the paramount essentiality of a Church, whose vocation is the universal, perpetual, and orthodox instruction of the human race. Beloved brethren, the relation of this achievement is the task imposed upon me, called upon to raise my voice in the midst of you, not through inclination, but in compliance with the desire of the venerable Pontiff, whom I revere as the representative of the Most High. Brethren, expect not that I shall address you in any pomp of phraseology. Come you here in quest of the gorgeous embellishments of eloquence, or of the fascinations of oratory?—go and be disappointed, I exclaim! Perish such momentary effect, the mere echo of transient declamation! I beseech from Heaven an eloquence of eternity. I ask no higher endowment than the charity of Jesus Christ; and should grace accompany this discourse, it will afford another

to the innumerable instances, wherein the Almighty strengthens the weak to confound the strong.

Eternal God! eleven years since, in all humility, I presented myself before the sacred altar of this temple, and renounced the vain glory of this world, its delusions and its pomps, to clothe myself as one of thy ministers. I came to seek for the rewards thou didst promise to those who do thy service in a trustful spirit. Patiently I waited the time my ministrations might assume the missionary form, and that I might be appointed bearer of the glad tidings of salvation to others. Lord, thou hast accorded to me these rewards! Oh! permit me to communicate a foretaste of them to my brethren. Assist thy servant with guarded lips, faithful to my heart as my heart is faithful to thy law.

I commence by asserting an incontrovertible fact. Man is an instructed being. The exercise of my senses at this moment establishes its verity. Mine eyes announce to me countenances various as the characteristics of the human mind, and moulded to the length or shortness of time they have sojourned on this earth. They of all ages are here. Around me I behold hair golden on the sunny brow of youth, and gray on the wrinkled forehead. Here, I discern features indicative of fatigue; and there, the milder expression arising from ease meets the eye. Austere science, I mark in some; the gentler emotions of literature, in others. Ay! here are the aged and the young. What do you expect from me? The truth! Ah! then, you possess it not! You are seeking for it, aspiring after it, hope to arrive at it; and lo! you are here!

You had mothers; from whose breasts you imbibed the first elements of your instruction. They watched the first manifestations of the senses; they strengthened your reflective powers by continually directing your attention to exterior objects; they gradually opened to you the long, laborious transmission of sounds and words, the conductors of intellectuality, leading to a more latent, but a more precious treasure—conscience! Gentle punishments and endearing rewards they dispensed to you, according to your demerits or deserts, and taught you to distinguish between the beauty of justice and the deformity of injustice. They modelled you into beings susceptible of moral worth

and rational dignity. Your mothers led you to Religion, tenderly directing your first advances towards the mysteries of Faith, and taught you to discern invisible through the reflection of visible things; they induced you to be religious by their instruction. Thus in the dawn of your existence, the four elements of earthly and eternal life, sensation or feeling, idea, conscience, and faith, were treasured for you,—imposed upon you.

When man passes the era of primary education, he belongs to either of the two great classes into which the human family are divided—the enlightened and the illiterate. The unlettered class of the people are, through gaunt poverty and incessant toil, incapacitated, by total want of leisure, from having recourse to rudimental education. Deprived of personal study, they are not strengthened by reflection. Incompetent to discuss thoroughly their ideas, feelings, or faith, though able to discern them, they free themselves from obligation to any imparted education, by accepting a new system of knowledge, whose judges they imagine themselves, whilst, in reality, they are merely its slaves.

Thus, when Jesus Christ deigned to appear in this world, He, the sublime disenthraller of mental intellectuality, irradiated the human mind. When advancing towards that glorious mission meted out to him by the Father, He said:—"God sent me to preach the gospel to the poor." (St. Luke iv. 18.) And wherefore to the poor in preference? Because they are the great majority, and because the Almighty, holding all equal, when his omnipotence weighs them in the scales of his eternal justice, the souls of the people must preponderate by their multitude. Moreover, this potent reason: the poor, from their inability to acquire knowledge, require a master, whose lessons of truth are dispensed without cost and imbibed without peril. And if such be the untoward position of the aggregate of mankind, should there exist no exception in favor of the enlightened? Could they not abandon an instruction that made them what they are, and, by their mental vigor, remodel, or recreate, a new and another intellect, at which many aim?

Remember, brethren, with what feelings you departed from the bosoms of your Christian families, when young, to enter the great theatre of public life. Vividly you recollect that time,

awakening, as it did, a series of thoughts till then unknown. These thoughts were the oblation to Reason; and as you fell upon your knees you exclaimed, Here is my master and king! Reason shall instruct me for the future, as to the existence of sensation, ideas, feelings, conscience, the existence of those invisible intelligences by which the world is sustained. You worshipped as if you would repudiate all preconceived, pre-existent ideas. But you could not divest yourself of primitive associations of thought. Your reasoning faculty was only the gift of your education. You would make it your God. You were the creatures of prejudice. You were sons of men, and you are so still.

In reality, the enlightened section of mankind is subdivided: some whose leisure leaves them their own masters; others, and incomparably the more numerous, are the more necessitous class, whose time is circumscribed by comparative, often by positive toil. The division of property depends on the assistance of labour, to transmit what our fathers have bequeathed. Midst drudgery and difficulties such as surround those who toil, short is the time they can dedicate to inquire after the mighty questions agitating the human mind; and shorter yet to institute a philosophical investigation into themselves, which alone would occupy an entire existence. This class are nearly as helpless as the majority of the people. They have more pride, and yet are amongst the poor of mind, to whom our Saviour came to preach salvation. Beware! brethren, lest you interpret in a sense too circumscribed or material, the words of the Gospel.

The first indigence is the indigence of truth, as the first riches of the soil are acquired by truth. When man recognises this, and acknowledges the treasure, he is wealthy, nor would he barter his destiny for all the fleeting magnificence of kings. When the materials of mind assume this form, what remains? Some privileged men, from Heaven have received genius—a rare gift. Others, fortune—a boon less rare, but yet a gift also. Others there are, who possess innate inclinations to labor.

Three clements, then, are indispensable for the attainment of knowledge,—genius, fortune, and labor; a person in pos-

session of which may reject ideas resulting from instruction—like an eagle lifting its offspring to gaze on the sun, if from which the fledgling eaglet shrinks, fiercely its parent's claws dash it to the earth, as if unworthy of a home in the air. But the class of men here alluded to, strive in vain. Above their own heads, the sword of captivity or death is suspended. It is not one man only who finds he is instructed, but nations and centuries. The man of genius, after having conquered his nurse and teachers, has others to overcome—himself, and the prejudices of his own nation and his own times. Can he accomplish this? Has such a circumstance ever occurred?

Behold! by looking around, does not a man bear in his countenance a characteristic of the country and age whence he drew his being? Regardless of rank, I ask you all, would you be what you are if you had been born six hundred years ago? Six centuries since, and to this Cathedral in which you come to listen to the words of the Redeemer, you would have carried stones to construct its basis. For the sake of hypothesis, were you born elsewhere than where you were born, would you be what you are? Why is France Catholic,—Prussia, Protestant,—Turkey, Mohammedan? In people so contiguous, why the difference so essential? A contrary faith prevailed among them, a dissimilar system of education to that which they have received, produced results; mind and morals assume a totally distinct character. Yea! nations not only experience the yoke of authority and impose it, but have to bear its infliction from others in their turn. Their inheritance of prejudice and passion mars their advancement. The mobility of time also: hence the independence of man stands accused, the effect of a restless submission paid to, and engendered by successive tyrannies. Tyrants change; tyranny, never! Singular anomaly! they glory in the age, they subjugate their convictions not only to tolerate, but triumph in the prejudices of the times in which they live. But the Christians instructed by the Church are not the fragile offspring of the past, present, or any future century. Eternity is ours! We will not submit to the teaching of age, nation, or man. We know and see that such tuition is false, variable, and contradictory. Its lessons embrace no more than what all philosophies do, a certain amount of phenomena, the proofs of experience, axioms

or formularies for poor human reason, and a distinction between what is just and unjust. But what is there in human instruction which harmonizes? What does it not corrupt?

In dismay, I travel over where man vainly professes to teach man. I find nothing but minds various as tongues, contradiction the guide of all consistency, the guardian of none. I cite London, Paris, Berlin, Constantinople, and Pekin, renowned cities, governing and instructing the universe. Have they not all their separate systems of law, morality—their doctors of a day? But why seek for illustration beyond this metropolis, to which the consenting testimony of fame has awarded the centre of civilization? Well! number the doctrines it has mooted and disseminated over Europe during these last eighty years. Idolatry had its gods, and an unparalleled Pantheon erected to perpetuate deified defilement. Who could now even epitomize the diversity of opinion, or build another Pantheon sufficiently vast to afford them all an altar and a tomb? And yet man is an educated being, a participant of notions imbibed in childhood. If he were not instructed, his communication would be direct with truth, or his errors voluntary and personal. But he is taught, and infancy cannot resist education founded upon error; and the people cannot defend themselves against erroneous instruction, nor resist the supremacy which superior minds exercise over them in youth.

Such is the present state of society, a state of oppression leading to irremediable degradation, which Divine teaching alone can avert, whose influence should alike protect the child and the more mature, the unlettered and the erudite. Truth is only a name; man, the pitiable plaything of succeeding opinions, evanescent as they are unreal. On the other hand, there must be on earth Divine authority to instruct; otherwise, he who is deprived of that instruction, or who imbibes any other, must necessarily be deceived. The pagans were sensible of this. Plato said, "*It was requisite that a master came from Heaven to instruct humanity.*" In this he anticipated St. Paul, who, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, said, "*God gave us Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Doctors, that henceforth we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the wickedness of men, by cunning*

craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive." (Chap. iv. 11 and 14.)

But by what sign is this tutelar authority recognised? How discover the true one amid the many false?

By one sign—to speak of one only, dazzling as the sun—which false authority neither can imitate nor possess; that is the sign of universality, the sign of Catholicity. If in this world there exists one fact more positive than another, assuredly it is, that no human authority, however assumed, has been able to be Catholic, which literally means a supreme power to surpass the boundaries of class, men, and nationality.

Human authorities are of three orders: philosophical doctrines, non-Christian worship, and Christian sects. Philosophy never reached the humbler classes, never united intellectual men in one school, but presented a sad spectacle, to which esteem could not extend a more approving sentiment than pity. Exists there now in our country, or elsewhere, a reigning philosophic authority? None. The non-Christian worship has never been aught than a system of nationality; and the Mohammedan only aspired to universality, by compelling the universe to adopt the Koran and Kalifat by force of arms. Islamism became the victim of division. Every chief had a kingdom; every kingdom a sect. Turkey and Persia, divided between the sensual worship of Ali and Omar, afford a melancholy instance of the miseries arising from deviation into false doctrine. Where on the globe exists a non-Christian religion inculcating universality? Nowhere. The like phenomenon of misconception has been abundantly reproductive in professed Christian sectaries. Witness the two great living schisms—the Greek and Protestant, furnishing another lamentable illustration of the insecurity of unguided minds. The Greeks remained submissive to the Patriarch of Constantinople so long as that city remained the centre of the East; but when the Russian empire extended, the Russian Greeks founded a separate Church, thus rending asunder the last and only link of that chain which, in the infancy of their empire, bound them to the chief seat of their schism.

The Protestants diverged into as many fractions of creeds as kingdoms. The Episcopalians of England, the Presbyterians of Scotland, the Calvinists of Holland, the new Evangelicals of

Prussia, not to enumerate the dissenters that no kingdom has been able to assemble in national unity, nor the thousands of sects in the United States, who have no longer names because they have too many.

The true Church, at her origin, asserted her name, CATHOLIC, nor has the test of eighteen hundred years gainsaid that title. The truth was too sublime; it disheartened disputation. This church, thus divinely instituted for the instruction of the human race, alone constitutes the universal authority, notwithstanding the difficulties she encountered and overcame. The Roman Empire leagued its whole power against this immense, uncompromising, and indisputable authority. Persecution, unrelenting from the beginning, pierced it; yet it outlived the Romans, exceeded the limits of their empire, assumed supremacy over Persia, penetrated into Ethiopia, and joined the Indies and Scythia to its sway. This authority subjugated the empire and triumphed over its ruins.

Barbarians arrived to annihilate the temporal unity founded by heathen Rome; they found it destroyed. Whilst all nations had changed—the very limits of their dominion obliterated, and memorials scattered, the Roman Catholic Church diffused her universal identity further and further still, until no corner of civilized society remained unexplored to her conversion. Other nations, advanced in refinement, had shunned the Barbarians; Christianity sought them, not for conquest or spoil, but to lead them rejoicing captives to the freedom of the One same Altar, to the instruction of the same pulpit.

New worlds were discovered. The Church saw, and arrived soon as the conquerors, and the Indies of the East and the West knew the Lord upon whose kingdom of truth the sun since then hath never set! Protestantism, in its efforts to destroy unity and Catholic universality, again only showed, by the spectacle of its divisions, the impossibility of men to establish a Church by their own virtues. To accomplish so mighty an enterprise, the jealousy of temporal power would require to be prostrated or lulled, the diversity of languages removed, the enmities of nation against nation assuaged; but above all, the independence of mind, which is no more than submission to false doctrines, a flatterer of pride and supporter of individual reasonings,

would have to bow to an equal of its own creation. Never will obstacles so formidable be overcome by error—a weapon too weak for such a conquest. Because, if error cannot conceal from pride the use of comprehension and logical contradiction, it cannot unite mind and will. This unity the Church alone supplies, and, with it, incontestable proofs of Divinity. The Church is Catholic:—she is consequently true.

Brethren, recollect, I beseech you, the Catholic Church comprises not only all the nations of the earth, spiritually including the weak and the powerful, the untaught and the literate; all without distinction share the same symbols and the same faith.

The grossness of Heathenism was given over to the unintellectual multitude, Philosophy was attained alone by the erudite few. Thus their elements were separate. Protestantism obviously inherits this radical vice. It inculcates one course for the *élite*, and another for the unenlightened. It commands the masses to be subservient to authority, and enfranchises the learned from any restraint. The people believe in the ministers; the lettered man believes in the Bible and himself—error instructing inspiration.

In this respect the Catholic Church is all Divine; not only it extends protection to the weak, but it elevates them equal to the strong. You will say: If this Church inculcateth living knowledge to mankind dead in sin, why defer her visible establishment so many ages after the creation? Why her age only eighteen hundred years, and not six thousand? All is destined to impress an example of the fall of poor humanity.

Nature, body, soul, society, and truth were required in order for man more profoundly to feel the imperative necessity of reparation. God did not, however, abandon man anterior to the constitution of his Church. From all time He preserved man. He communicated truth through Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. An unbroken succession of Prophets enshrined the sanctity of Revelation. The Church from the beginning existed with God, but to Jesus Christ was reserved the glory of her visible organization. She was abeyant: He fashioned her ministrations into force. Christ did not say He would establish His Church; but He said, On this rock I will found it. A rock destined *to dash to pieces those who should fall upon it, and those upon whom it should fall.* (Matthew

xxi. 44.) The glory of Christ overshadowed the Church prior to her consummation; and that glory gave sustainment to man. Man's position, though less favoured then, was sufficient to justify the goodness of God, had men been desirous to profit by the mysterious mediation. Man perished by his own non-acceptance of life, and not through the pre-ordination of Omnipotence.

To the Church, Truth owes its social existence, and if by retrospection we retrace the arguments we have advanced, and ask ourselves: Why is man an instructed being? The answer is: Man is social; resembling all creatures in community with their own kind; but man's intelligence raising him loftily above animal existence, is indebted to society to exercise his affections by investigating knowledge, whose nourishment is truth, and thence, to transmit the fruit of his research, through the conduct of instruction. Had he not sinned, God alone would have been his preceptor. Sin severed him from innocence, and he arrogated to himself the accessories of evil to contemn and corrupt the maxims of the Deity, even though the Almighty continued to be his teacher.

Hence arose superstition, to alter the vestiges of truth; hence, Philosophy, the effort of finite mind aiming to discover the source of Infinite Veracity; and hence, also, the necessity of an Instructive Church, perpetuating truth and propitiating God to vouchsafe grace through redemption. But the final organization of this Church was suspended for man more poignantly to experience his disastrous fall.

In our days, my brethren, this Catholic Church, too formidable, too august for mere man alone to institute, now struggles with those who would weaken it to destruction. Stripped by man of exterior ornaments,—conferred by piety, but regarded by him as emblems of inconvenient, nay, dangerous power,—insulted in its apparent weakness, it resembles a giant whom children with puny strokes vainly strive to beat to the earth. Yes, our Church defends herself not by reprisal, but by the unity of her aggregate members. *Mole sud stat*—her immobility, her unchangeableness, is itself a victory! Calm, because within her bosom dwell immortal promise and the spirit of God, her triumphs are beautifully blended with tenderness on behalf of humanity, because that humanity more or less may attach its

destinies to the greatness of the Church. To this amount only is the Church apprehensive. Brethren, be not deceived. The mighty question asked these six thousand years, is: Shall victory or defeat accompany Christian truth? Until the coming of the Messiah, defeat lurked in its path; since then, victory and the Catholic Church shared its way, the rock based by Jesus Christ. Fallen humanity conspires to overthrow itself, for the Church is humanity redeemed, enlivened by Faith, led by Hope, supported by Charity, endeared to the Spirit of God. Therefore, within the vitals of human nature, is this war, this wrestle for mastery. Between the humanity of sense and the humanity of mind rages the warfare. One is the champion of antiquity, the wearer of four thousand years; the other is modern, and not half so old. Which does your heart prefer? That is the question. To hope for the antique portion of humanity to triumph without a church, after having destroyed her, is as hopeless as to find effect without cause. It is like seeking to strengthen and enlarge an edifice by the destruction of its foundation. Much is said of the past being at variance with futurity; and it is true, the ancient world and the new dispute. And what is the new, unless that world created by the Church? And the ancient, what is it, if it be not that society which existed without a Church? As the Christian, according to the testimony of Holy Writ, is the new man, the Catholic Faith is the new humanity. Whosoever impugns it, invokes the past: whoso defends it, appeals to the future!

I am aware that many expect a new revelation more perfect than Christ hath given; a new Church, purer than the work of our Saviour; a new humanity, more sanctified than that formed by the Church. But where is the new Messiah? Where the new Church? Where the new humanity? And what do we see around, if not old passions, ancient egotism, the more hideous because, the more unholy, they elevate their heads in a community founded by Christian love!

Ah, my brethren, when the Church appeared to the world, she did not thus herald her approach. She edified without causing ruin, and you ruin without any atoning ingredient of edification. But it is no small merit to entertain hope. Be then children of Hope, and saintly desires and destinies. And you, whose

intelligence is of loftier range; you, who appreciate the intrinsic nothingness, the efforts of this impotent age; you, who know that the tomb of the Church would be the sepulchre of the civilized world; conceive and cherish, I conjure you, a more ardent faith and a livelier charity; devote yourselves heart and soul to this Church, beyond the limits of which, in time or eternity, there is no salvation.

A Sermon

"On the Reward of the Elect."

"*Sed, sicut scriptum est, quod oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit, quæ præparavit Deus iis qui diligunt illum.*"

"*But, as it is written: that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.*"—St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

The blessings which the Almighty God prepares for His faithful servants should be, Christians, the subject of our serious meditations rather than that of our public discourses. Eloquence may captivate an auditory, and genius embellish a subject, but what I propose to-day to your attention, defies the orator and baffles his art—*excedit omnem sermonem.*—(St. Augt.) No, Christians, I must not expect to understand a subject that the great Apostle did not even attempt to explain. Elevated to the third heavens, he saw the secrets of God, that man cannot reveal, because no language can expound the riches of his glory, nor tongue express the ineffable treasures of his beatitude.

You can, Christians, more easily imagine than I describe the felicity that awaits the elect in the heavenly mansions; it surpasses all our words, all our thoughts. It was this reflection that overwhelmed St. Paul, when he exclaimed that we could not understand the blessings of eternity, as our ideas here were imperfect, limited, and that all we could say or think might well be compared to the dissertations of little children, who pretended to expound matters above their comprehension. No, says St. Augustine, we may acquire these blessings, but we cannot estimate them—*acquiri potest, estimari non potest.* Inadequate to the sublime and consoling task, all I can say on the happy home of the blessed, will be, in proportion to my subject, as earth is to heaven, or man to God; for heaven is the work

of God's hands, that is, the masterpiece of His industry, whereas the earth is only the spontaneous production of His will: man is only a creature, whereas God is a creator. Though aided by the light of revelation, our notions of celestial joys are as the weak glimmerings of fancy compared to the vast conception of the master-mind, or as the imperfect copy compared to the great original, stamped with the seal of God's omnipotence.

But if I cannot answer your expectations upon so difficult a subject, I can say enough to excite your curiosity, and make you ambition the joys I cannot understand, much less describe. That you may the more easily retain this salutary lesson, I will confine myself to the most striking features of my subject. I say, then, that the reward of the just will be perfect, incomprehensible, and equal to all their desires; this is my first proposition. Again, the reward of the just will be immutable, eternal, and worthy of God; this is my second proposition. The ambition of the creature, however extravagant and boundless, shall be satisfied; this you shall see in the first part. The liberality of God, however infinite and inexhaustible, shall be satisfied, because He shall give all that He can bestow; this you shall see in the second part. In a word, the blessings of eternity are incomprehensible, imperishable, infinite, and should be the object of your ambition, as they shall be to-day the subject of your attention.

First Part.—The glory of the elect must be great, as God has destined it to be the reward of his friends, and as St. Paul, who witnessed it, could not describe its magnificence. All this world contains is nothing in comparison to what the Almighty reserves for the Saints;—the earth and its blessings shall pass away, and can offer no pure enjoyment: pain treads on the heels of pleasure, and every rose has its thorns; but in heaven our happiness shall be without alloy, pure and perfect, greater than we can even imagine. The blessed shall see their God and possess Him eternally; rapt in His glory, they shall be, as it were, transformed into God Himself, according to the expression of St. Gregory of Nazianza,—*Non multi erimus, sed toti Deiformes*, (Orat. 4, de Theo.) They shall seem as one, for they shall all be marked with the seal of His love: they shall see but Him, feel but Him, and love but Him; this love shall bind them so

closely to the Godhead, that they shall seem a portion of Himself, and enjoy all His beatitude, that is so perfect and so incomprehensible. But, as we cannot form an idea of this happiness, because we judge every thing by the senses, St. Paul tells us that the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him.

The light of God's glory alone can make us sensible of eternal glory, but whatever grace we receive in this life, we cannot understand, as St. Augustine affirms, what God prepares for those who love Him,—*fide non comprehenditur, spe non tangitur, charitate non capitur; ut scias excessum gloriæ supra omnem potentiam.* Our faith teaches us that the essence of God shall form our beatitude, and as He is infinite, our happiness must be equally infinite. We shall see the charms of this Beauty always lovely and always new, that always thought on us, and conducted us to the home of His love, to share all His happiness, all His delights. Our ambition, that is now insatiable, shall be satiated; and never satiated, because its object shall be infinite, and it shall know no other bounds,—*semper satieris et nunquam satieris.*—(St. Augt. hom. 8, in Joan.) Alexander thought the earth too little for the glory of his name, and sighed for other worlds to satisfy his ambition: but when we possess God, we can wish for nothing more, as we shall have all God has; and surely what suffices for God, must be enough for us, says the learned Venantius—*Certe quod Deo sufficit tibi satis est.*

This, St. Augustine beautifully expresses in other terms, when, addressing his Creator, he exclaims:—thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it settles in Thee.—*Fecisti nos ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.* There is a void in man's heart that worlds cannot fill up; add conquest to conquest, possession to possession, wealth to wealth, title to title, dignity to dignity, give him all he wishes, he sighs for more; but it shall be satisfied with infinity, for there shall be nothing beyond. It is, Christians, in the possession of this Being, infinitely perfect, that the supreme felicity consists, and this supreme felicity we can find only in heaven. There we can wish for nothing greater, nothing richer, nothing finer, nothing sweeter, nothing more durable, nothing

more delicious than God; for, if there could be any thing more desirable than the sovereign good, He would not be infinitely perfect, nor the end of all our desires. Possessing God, then, we possess, in a supreme and perfect degree, every good:—*Bonum est, bonum simplex, ipsum bonum, quo cuncta sunt bona.* This is evident, for, as the cause eminently possesses all the perfections of its effects, so the Almighty contains, in an eminent degree, all the riches, all the sweets, all the beauties of His works, without any of their imperfections.

This is why St. Augustine has told us, that it was easier for us to specify what was not in heaven, than to enumerate its blessings,—*Possumus facilius dicere, in illâ vitâ æternâ, quid ibi non sit, quam quid ibi sit.*—(De Simb. l. 3.) Saint Denis and other theologians tells us that we can know God either by affirmation, or denegation, and as He is to be our reward, if we only understood His perfections, we might estimate the reward. We know him by affirmation, when we paint Him with all the perfections we can imagine; just as a painter adds to the canvas the colours necessary to complete his design: we know Him by denegation, when we represent Him without any of the imperfections of the creatures we know; as the sculptor, who copies life by striking from the marble all the asperities that conceal the sublime work he wishes to produce. But what do I say? All this cannot give you, Christians, a perfect idea of what I describe, for the possession of God shall be the assemblage of all blessings, and the absence of all evils, of all imperfections, according to the remark of St. Augustine,—*Nihil ibi erit nisi quod amemus.*—(Epist. 52.)

Now, when you have enumerated all that you can imagine as likely to constitute your happiness, and to satisfy your desires; as wealth, power, honors, beauty, and all the other advantages that you can ambition, you may exclaim, with the same holy father, It is not enough, God is something more:—*Dicite, non est istud.*—(In Ps. 26, enar. 2.) Here we estimate objects as they affect us, and we are happy either by caprice or circumstance; that which pleases us is always agreeable, and as every thing is subject to change, we can promise ourselves no perfect happiness; but when we possess God, nothing shall disturb our enjoyment nor diminish our pleasure, because all our faculties shall

be satisfied; God shall be the principle, the motive, the end, and the object of all our delights; we shall drink, says the prophet (Abdias), and sup up, and we shall be as though we were not. Nothing answers our expectations on earth; every thing shall surpass them in heaven: for what can we desire when we enjoy God?—*Quid enim quærat is cui Deus adest?*

Surely, says St. Augustine, if any one asks more than God Himself, he must be very avaricious. No, Christians, once seated in the heavenly Jerusalem, which St. John has so magnificently described, you shall have all you can desire—no fear shall dim your prospects, no sorrow shall tarnish your enjoyments. Heaven shall be as a banquet-hall, lit up with glory, whose guests shall quaff the inexhaustible cup of God's pleasure, and feast on immortality,—*Faciet illos discumbere, et transiens ministrabit illis.*—(Apoc. xxi.) You shall be received there by a bountiful Host, who shall place every thing in His kingdom at your disposal, and tell you to set no bounds to your enjoyment. What abundance of happiness! exclaims St. Bernard; you shall find nothing in heaven you can dislike; and you shall find every thing you can desire,—*Quæ est ista copia, tibi nihil quod nolis, sit; totum sit quod velis.*—(Serm. de trip. gen. hon.)

Far from all the objects that do not suit your inclinations, you may select those that flatter your taste; you can make your choice. Choice, do I say?—you shall possess them and enjoy them at the same time. If you ambition knowledge, you shall drink of the fountain of all knowledge, you shall think without study, live without toil, converse without contradiction, and watch without alarm; faith shall no longer impose silence on your reason, nor hope retard your joys: no craving desire to stimulate your ambition, no ardent passion to disturb your repose. Do you love the rural scenes and the modest retreats, the splendid palaces and the busy circles?—you shall have both; nature shall exhaust her treasures that you may feast on plenty, and drink of her blessings. But why proceed?—what can I say worthy of my subject?—I can portray heaven only by copying earth. No genius, however sublime, can seize the inebriating cup of God's plenty, nor sufficiently extol the sweets of each delicious draught. No painter, however inspired, can sketch out the fairy halls of heaven's mansions, nor poet sing,

in adequate strains, the beauties of this abode. Suffice it to say, Christians, that it shall be worthy of the elect, and worthy of God. Their abode shall not only be magnificent, but their happiness shall be perfect, as you have seen:—it shall also be immutable and eternal, as you shall see.

SECOND PART.—Nothing is perfect, Christians, that is susceptible of augmentation or diminution: if, then, the happiness of the just could be increased or diminished, it would not be perfect; nor would God himself be perfect, unless He were eternal and immutable. When I told you the happiness of the Saints was perfect, you ought and must have immediately concluded that their condition was immutable, and that no time could limit the duration of their enjoyment. This is what made the great Apostle exclaim, that man could never understand the inestimable blessings that the Almighty prepared for those who love Him; this is what made St. John affirm that he knew we would be like God at the coming of Christ;—we know, that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is:—*Scimus quoniam cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus.* (1 John ii.)

Observe, Christians, the reason assigned by the Apostle; it is remarkable, and should, if you but understand it, convince you of the great truth which I would impress upon your minds. We shall be like God, because we shall see Him as he is:—*Quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est.* (Ib.) Now, as God is eternal and immutable, we shall be like Him; the beatific vision will not consist alone in seeing God face to face, as He really is, but it will identify us with Him, in such a manner as that nothing can ever after separate us. As the property or the quality of an object, though not an essential portion of itself, is nevertheless so intimately connected with it, as to seem inseparable, so the souls of the just will be rapt in the Divinity, as to seem possessed of all the attributes of the Godhead.

They shall be creatures in substance, but gods in perfection. This the Apostle St. John has illustrated, when he said, "for as the Father hath life in Himself; so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself." (John v. 26.) As the Almighty God, though perfectly happy by nature, has communicated His power and happiness to His only Son, so He shall also do to

His children by adoption. *Similes ei erimus*—we shall be like God. Why? Because we shall see Him as He is:—*Quoniam videbimus eum sicuti est.* (Ib.) He shall be our reward, and it shall be eternal and immutable, as St. Augustine observes:—*Præmium virtutis erit ipse qui virtutem dedit.* (Lib. ii. de Civ. Dei, cap. 30.) This is what made the same doctor say, that the kingdom of heaven was venal:—*Regnum cœlorum venale est.* It was also this made St. John exclaim, that none could understand the happiness of the elect, but the elect themselves, who enjoyed it:—*Nemo scit, nisi qui accipit.* This is what made Jesus Christ Himself tell His disciples to suffer all for His sake, that their reward would be very great in heaven:—*merces vestra copiosa est in Cœlo.* (Matt. v. 12.)

The Saviour of the world could not be mistaken in His estimate of this blessing, for He knew its value, nor did He think it too much to lay down His life in order to secure it for Himself and for us, as St. Paul writes to the Hebrews. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; for, continues the Apostle, it became Him, for whom are all things, who had brought many children into glory, to perfect the Author of their salvation, by *His* passion. (Heb. ii. 9, 10.) How great, indeed, must this reward be, as the blood of a God was not too much to purchase it! *Proposito sibi gaudio, sustinuit crucem.* (Heb. xii. 2.) And yet St. Thomas assures us, that one hour of Christ's life was worth more than the lives of all men past, present, and to come.

But that you may be the better able to understand this, Christians, only consider what the saints have done to acquire it; read the dreadful torments of martyrs, the persecutions of confessors, the glorious sacrifices of virgins;—see how eloquently St. Paul extols the conduct of many just, who, in the old law, conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, and stopped the mouths of lions. Others were racked, continues the Apostle; others had trial of mockeries and stripes, of bands and prisons; they were stoned, they were cut asunder, they wandered about in sheep-skins, in goat-skins, being in want, distress, afflicted; of whom the world was not worthy. All these received not the promise; not accepting deliverance, that they

might find a better resurrection. The same Apostle assures us, in his epistle to the Romans, (viii. 18,) that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us. He also declares to Timothy, (ii. ch. i. 12,) that he was not ashamed to suffer. For I know, says he, whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day. The penitent king pined amidst the splendour of his court, and in ecstasy exclaimed, How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!—my soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. (Psal. lxxxiii.)

What shall I say, Christians, of the hosts of confessors who have preceded us in the road to heaven, leaving us so many salutary examples to animate and encourage us? Ah! they did not hesitate to abandon all the advantages of birth and fortune for an eternal kingdom; they knew that their loss was gain, and that their sacrifices on earth would be faithfully registered in heaven. Some laid down their sceptres, and smiled at all this world could give, to secure the imperishable reward that could alone satisfy their ambition.

The martyrs triumphed, says Tertullian, by the hope of this reward; their bodies were tormented, but their souls were already in heaven:—*Nil crus sentit in nervo, dum animus est in cœlo.* (Ad Mart.) The virgins triumphed that they might be crowned, and Teresa declares herself ready to suffer for eternal life: *Aut pati, aut mori.* The confessors triumphed, that they might enjoy their recompense; and Serapio stands forth naked, proclaiming the cause of his abnegation, holding the Gospel in his hand as a sufficient reason to justify his apparent folly.—*Ille me spoliavit.* Moses, who was the wisest of men, denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter; rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasure of the Egyptians. For, says the Apostle, he looked unto the reward:—*Respiciebat enim remunerationem.* (Cor. xi.) Saint Augustine teaches us a great truth, Christians, when he tells us, that virtue, having no adequate reward in this life, must obtain it in the next:—*Præ-*

mium virtutis erit ipse qui virtutem dedit. (Lib. 22, de Civ. cap. 30.)

Jesus Christ Himself assures us that our sufferings and tribulations are nothing in comparison to the reward that shall follow them. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven. (Matt. v. 12.) Let not your hearts rejoice at earthly blessings: they are not worth your attention:—*Nolite gaudere super his.* (Luke x. 20.) Ambition rather incorruptible pleasure and eternal rest, says St. Augustine, and you will despise this world and all it can give:—*Voluptatem illam incorruptam, et quietem sine labe concupisce; et promittentem dona ista temporalia, et totum mundum deridebis.* (In Psalm lxiii.) Why? Because, Christians, nothing less can satisfy us. All we possess or enjoy on earth is inadequate to our desires, because all this world affords is ephemeral, fleeting, and evanescent, and that nothing less than the Creator, who is eternal, immutable, and infinite, can satisfy the creature. This is what made St. Bernard say, that our reward would consist in seeing God and living in God:—*Præmium nostrum est videre Deum et vivere de Deo.* (Lib. Med. c. 4.)

Let us not, Christians, insult the Almighty, by thinking that he destined this world to be the abode, much less the reward, of the elect; all the blessings it can offer escape us when we least expect it; in heaven, our abundance shall continually increase; upon earth, we cannot be insensible to universal calamity; in heaven, the happiness of others shall increase our own; upon earth, our fairest hopes are only the promise of an hour; in heaven, all our hopes shall be crowned—all our wishes satisfied; on earth, envy presides over all our destinies, and drops a bitter tear into the honied cup of life; in heaven, our joys shall never be followed by regret, nor our smiles by a tear. When St. Peter beheld his Master beaming with the light of His own glory, he would have gladly fixed his abode upon Mount Thabor, nor could he have imagined any thing more magnificently grand, more beautifully sublime. In his admiration, he beseeched Christ to allow him to remain in His presence: "let us," said he, addressing Him, "make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias." (Matt. xvii. 4.) But St. Mark and

St. Luke assure us, that the Apostle knew not what he said. (Mark ix. 5; Luke ix. 33.) For his beatitude, however transcendent, could not be eternal on earth, and so it disappeared as a vision.

This manifestation of the Godhead, in which Christ had been recognized by His eternal Father, overwhelmed the Apostle with glory, and he sank in the dust; but he soon stood up at the voice of Christ, divested of all his splendor: he was still upon earth, and Thabor, however enchanting, was not to be his last home. He forgot that a mountain, however beautiful it might appear when illumined by the presence of a God, was not that heaven he lights up with His glory, and which He has prepared for the elect. The transfiguration of Christ was only a spark of His divinity, a passing meteor, when we imagine what he really is when crowned with all the majesty of His glory. O! Christians, if an imperfect display of His glory struck Peter to the earth, what must it be in heaven, where God appears in all His magnificence? Because only there, says the Prophet, our Lord is magnificent:—*Qui solummodo ibi magnificus est Dominus noster.* (Isa. xxxiii. 21.) His magnificence is elevated above the heavens:—*Magnificentia Tua super cœlos.* (Psalm viii. 2.) What must he be, when, contemplating the riches of His omnipotence, and beholding His faithful servants, He wishes to reward as a God! What must He be when, wishing to exhaust the treasures of His love, He pours out profusely the torrents of His joy, the torrents of His glory, and the torrents of His peace? *Torrens inundans letitiæ, flumen gloriæ et flumen pacis.* (St. Ber. in Dedicat. Eccl., serm. 6.) All He bestows on His servants here, however superior and magnificent, is nothing compared to what He reserves for them in eternity.

Here His blessings are doled out one by one, and, if I may say so, with parsimonious hand; some are even the reward of apparent virtues; but when He shall remunerate real virtue with all His munificence; when He shall be generous, not only through inclination, but by duty, and to accomplish His promises, oh! He shall be extravagantly generous, prodigally profuse. All He shall give shall seem, like Himself, infinite. His joys shall flow in torrents, and overwhelm His servants in oceans of delight. They shall feel no more the fountains of

His grace dried up in their hearts; they shall no longer sigh for comfort, no more shall they strike their palpitating breasts with the cold stone of the desert, to rekindle there the fire of divine love, nor chastise their bodies to wring their hearts into compunction. The days shall be gone, for ever gone, when, tormented by the cares of this wretched world, their happiest moments had been tinged by regret; their projects shall no longer be defeated, their hopes no longer blighted, their words no longer contradicted. No passing events, no civil commotions shall disturb their repose; envy shall no longer mar their happiness, nor hatred poison their enjoyment. Without apprehension for the future, or sorrow for the past, their pleasure shall be infinite, immutable as God; nor will it depend upon time to limit its duration, nor upon man to regulate its extent: time shall be measured only by eternity, and man shall be swallowed up in the abyss—*Torrens inundans letitiæ.*

Admired and beloved, none shall dispute their glory; every tongue shall become eloquent in their praise; all shall proclaim their wisdom, their strength, their courage, and their faith; the very demons shall pay them homage; and, vanquished by their magnanimity, they shall proclaim their triumph. All shall applaud their choice; all shall congratulate them. Seated near the Lamb, they shall be immersed in the tide of His glory, and honored as His friends:—*Angeli te tollent, et sistent coram Christo a quo amicus appellaberis.* (St. Basil. proe. in Ascet.) United for ever in the bonds of amity, all the elect shall love the same object, share the same delights, enjoy the same repose:—transported with gratitude, they shall extol the Author of their happiness, and, forming an immense concert, make heaven re-echo with the melody of their song. The voice of this multitude shall be, in the language of St. John, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned. (Apoc. ix. 16.)

Ah! Christians, arise, the Master calls you; it is already the eleventh hour; the banquet is spread, and the bridegroom, wishing to fill the princely halls of His ethereal palace, hath sent me to summon you to the feast, and to tell you at the same time to take your precautions that you may enter by the narrow gate;

for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able. (Luke xiii. 24.) You all wish to be admitted to the sumptuous repast, but have you all the nuptial raiment? Like the sons of Zebedee, you desire to be seated with Jesus Christ, some on the right hand and others on the left hand, in his glory; but let me ask you, can you drink His chalice, and be baptized with His baptism? (Mark x. 38.) As the young man in the Gospel, you all wish for eternal life, but can you renounce all this world can give, despise its vanities, vanquish your wicked passions, and hate yourselves, to follow Christ? You know where the inestimable pearl lies; but are you ready, like the merchant, to sacrifice every thing for its acquisition? (Matt. xiii. 45.)

O! amiable and beloved Jesus, Thy kingdom is in the midst of us, and Thy rewards ever ready; Thou art the way, the truth, and the life; Thou hast taught us the secrets of Thy wisdom, that, knowing Thee, we might serve Thee, and left us the treasures of Thy love, that, sharing them, we might possess Thee; grant, I beseech Thee, that, ever mindful of the heavenly Jerusalem, and encouraged by Thy promises, we may faithfully practise what Thou hast commanded, imitate what Thou hast practised, and find, in the accomplishment of Thy will on earth, the best pledge of our immortality in glory.—Amen.

A Sermon

Preached at Our Lady's Church, St. John's Wood.

"*Go, relate to John what you have seen and heard; the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he that is not scandalized in me.*"—MATT. xi. 4, 5.

"*Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, to the poor the Gospel is preached: and blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalized in me.*"—LUKE vii. 22, 23.

ALL things whatsoever are written, says St. Paul, in the words you have just heard read, for our instruction, that by peace and by hope we may be happy in the Lord. Are these words, then, my brethren, to be ineffectual and vain? are their power and their efficacy for ever vanished, and are they no more to be brought into operation and existence? No, my brethren; whilst the word lasts, so long will the power of Jesus be what it was when the disciples of John came to ask him who he was, or were they to look for another? Whilst time itself shall proceed in its destined career, so long will the power of Jesus be what it is now described to be. Though heaven and earth pass away, his words will not pass away. What consolation, then, is it for you, my brethren, believing, as you do, firmly and fondly, in the doctrine of Christ Jesus; attached, as you undoubtedly are, to that Church out of which there is no salvation; believing in the merits of a one only Redeemer, who not only proved that he was truly the Son of God, while dwelling among you, but who poured out the last drop of his blood to expiate on Calvary the sins of an offending world,—what a consolation, I say, to you, to remember that what has been written was written for

our instruction, and that, by peace and by charity, ye shall have hope in the Lord.

You expect from me, my brethren, a discussion of some topics that perhaps, however firmly we may believe in them, are disputed by those who differ from us,—let me trust, conscientiously and kindly; you expect from me the discussion of some topics which will confirm you in the faith that belongs to the saints; that may, perhaps, spread light over the otherwise darkened mind of those who differ from us, and show them that, however much we may be condemned for the doctrines we profess,—however much many of our tenets may be misrepresented and misinterpreted, yet that we believe nothing,—we ask our followers to believe nothing, for which we cannot advance sound argument and good ground for the belief, and which a thinking and reflecting man will, when he comes to think and to reflect, acknowledge to be sound, and therefore worthy of serious consideration.

Two days have scarcely elapsed since our Holy Mother, the Church, called on all her children to celebrate the purity and immaculate spotlessness of the conception of Mary, the mother of Jesus; and perhaps no time could be chosen better calculated to make an impression on the minds of Protestants, if any there be here, and also to strengthen our own faith in those precepts which we are called upon constantly to hold out as the advocates of our religion, than by making a proper use of the great solemnity, and proving to you, my brethren, one of our doctrines, which is much calumniated, much misrepresented, and constantly found fault with.

Perhaps there is nothing so strongly objected against us, as Catholics, than that we give to the Virgin Mother of Jesus as much homage, as much reverence, as much veneration and adoration as we give, and even in a greater degree than to her Divine Son. You, my brethren, who well know the true doctrines of our Church, are aware of the falsity of this accusation; and you who have not acquired a knowledge of them, I beg of you to attend to me for a few moments, whilst I endeavor to show you, not in a spirit of uncharitableness,—not to vituperate, calumniate, and find fault with those who differ from me, and, as I before said, I trust conscientiously,—but in a spirit of true

charity—for without it, religion itself cannot exist,—to show the foundation on which we build all the reverence, respect, and veneration which we feel for the Virgin Mother of God, and the spirits of the just made perfect; and then ask yourselves this one simple question: how are we to carry this topic into true and practical exercise?

The Catholic Church, during a lengthened period of eighteen hundred successive years, has been constantly found fault with by those who have thought proper to differ from her. Even in the very origin of Christianity, some were found to set up their own opinions in opposition to the doctrines of the Apostles and the first followers of Jesus; and the same spirit has prevailed from that very hour to the present. You, my brethren, well know, that although the waves of persecution have buffeted the Church,—though calumny has been incessant in its roar against it,—though vituperation and misinterpretation have met it at every turn, yet it shows you now, by its triumphant career over the waves of oppression, persecution, menace, difficulty and trial, that the gates of hell were never to prevail against it, and that the Church which Jesus founded on a rock should last while time itself should endure; ay, and should even, by its practice, be carried out through the vast extent of eternity itself.

Throughout the whole of the practices connected with our holy religion, there is none, my brethren, more dear to the heart of every true, sincere, and genuine believer, than that of giving to the Virgin Mother of Jesus the homage, respect, and veneration to which she, by her position, is justly entitled. Now, on what ground ought we to raise, and in reality to contemplate these topics? Paul himself has told us the foundation on which we are to build. "No man," says he, "can lay a foundation but that which is laid in Christ Jesus himself." By this ye prove the love which Jesus bears to Mary, the very pillar and groundwork of all our veneration, of all our attachment, of all our respect and esteem for her. Who can sufficiently honor the mother of God? who can sufficiently honor her who from all eternity was predestined by God to be the favored object of his own benediction? Mary, by her immaculate conception, and by the incarnation of the Holy Spirit overshadowing her, became the Mother of God. Mother of God! The mother of a prince,

the mother of a reigning monarch, is highly spoken of, is highly thought of; but dare we compare that which is of the earth, earthy, with the heavenly—with the celestial? Yet Mary, we are told, is the Mother of God; for from Mary was born Jesus, who was called Christ.

But whilst the Almighty designs Mary to become the mother of Messias, he wishes not that she shall simply be the channel through which his graces are conveyed from her to man, but wishes, also, that Mary should be a willing co-operator therein —a voluntary instrument in the grand and sublime work. Accordingly, what do we learn from Holy Writ? When the hour spoken of in the great councils of eternity arrived, an angelic messenger is sent purposely to Mary, to confer on her the great, stupendous, and exalted dignity of becoming the mother of Messias. The angel is sent from on high, to ask Mary if she would be a consenting party thereto, and to state that her co-operation and consent were necessary for the salvation and redemption of a fallen world. He enters the abode of this Virgin of spotless purity, he addresses her in language such as human lip never before addressed to the hearing of a human being: "Hail, full of grace! the Lord is with thee; thou art blessed among women; and the fruit of thy womb shall be blessed." Alarmed, terrified, astonished at the idea, she who had made vows of virginal purity—bewildered at the bare idea of becoming a mother, she exclaims, "How is this possible? I know no man!" The Omnipotent interposes, and by the voice of his celestial ambassador bids her "fear not;" and further adds, "for He thou bearest shall be holy; the Holy Spirit itself shall overshadow thee!" Mary retires and ponders in silence; she meditates on the grand, the awful, the sublime dignity with which she then is about to be invested; but far from being filled with vain-glory and pride at this so sudden and overwhelming elevation, she meekly and piously replies: "I am but thine handmaid, let it be done according to thy word." No sooner are these mysterious words pronounced—no sooner does Mary acquiesce in the proposal, by saying, "Be it done according to thy word," than the heavens open, the Just One is showered down, Jesus becomes man, and man receives a Redeemer and a Saviour!

My brethren, when we reflect on this, and only on this portion

of the history of this great and important event—an event spoken of even in the blissful garden of Paradise, where our proto-parents, in primitive innocence and in first simplicity, revelled and luxuriated in every enjoyment—this high and great object, spoken of at the moment before their exile and banishment was declared—this sublime matter of the incarnation, spoken of by prophets from the very beginning—who was the object of the desires of all the great and illustrious ones of old,—this, to which all preceding ages have looked forward with joy and delight, and to which all succeeding ages will look back with pleasure and satisfaction,—this stupendous event was not to take place until Mary consents. Oh, then, if Mary by her *consent* has thus brought into the world the Saviour of mankind—he who came not to destroy, but to shed his innocent blood for the salvation of all mankind—can your homage be too great—can any respect which we feel surpass the merits of this virgin of Judah, this bride of Nazareth, though the humble Mary herself? And the Almighty, having once made her a principal object of reverence in our regard, will not fail to extend to her every powerful prerogative, for "the grace of God," says St. Paul, "and his gifts are without repentance."

Having thus bestowed upon her this exalted, supereminent dignity of giving birth to the Saviour of the world, Mary will also, by her powerful influence with her Divine Son, assist us in carrying out daily and hourly the various qualifications requisite for our well-being and safe conduct in this world.

There are three requirements to which it is all-important that we attend, and in each of these she will not fail to assist and support us; our vocation, our justification, and our perseverance. Mary, still bearing in her virginal womb the Saviour of mankind, goes, we are told, to visit her cousin Elizabeth, then six months advanced in pregnancy; and what do we learn from the lips of the holy Elizabeth—for she was holy; Zachary and herself were found walking in all the commands of God—what do we hear from her sacred lips? "No sooner, Mary, hadst thou spoken—no sooner had thy voice sounded in my ears, than the infant in my womb leaped with joy!" O, sinners, tell me, have you never, when pondering on the exalted, the supereminent dignity of Mary,—have you never, when you have recited

that prayer, composed partly by the Church and partly by Heaven itself, which you know has been the means of so many blessings being scattered abroad throughout the universe,—have you never, in these moments of your own retirement, found the still small voice of conscience pressing upon you the feeling—"Have confidence in Mary?" she who was blessed beyond all women: she who bore in her sacred womb Jesus, the Saviour of the world, would also, if you listen to her voice, give you reason to leap with joy in the presence of your God; leaving aside, as John did, the obscurity of the womb, and bursting at once into existence.

You will be justified, also, by the practice of humility. Humility! that basis and foundation of the superstructure of all that man can perform, is that on which Mary built the grounds of her virtue and the lofty magnificence and sublimity of that temple of her goodness, before which we bow down and offer our orisons. You need a supporter, and where will you find one more powerful than she, who, by her own request, prevailed on Jesus to work his first miracle on earth. "They have no wine," says Mary, at the marriage-feast of Cana, in Galilee: "What is that to thee," said Jesus, "mine hour is not yet come." Mary, neither dejected nor cast down, but knowing in her own heart the mysterious secrets of eternity, replies to the head-waiter, "Whatever he commands thee to do, do thou." Six water-pots are filled with water, and instantly, by his omnipotence, wine takes the place of water, and Mary's request has been granted. If Jesus then, my brethren, would listen to Mary while on earth, and thus exalt his own power, and show his own influence by thus changing water into wine, what may we not expect when she is enthroned at his right hand, partaking of a beatific vision, partaking of all those sublime enjoyments and heavenly pleasures prepared for so noble, so chaste, and so pure a soul!

My brethren, we honor the Virgin, and we glory therein; we bow down to the Virgin—we glory therein; we venerate the Virgin—we glory therein.

We venerate, also, the spirits of the just made perfect. We pray to those sanctified and exalted beings now living with their God and enjoying their rewards,—those high and exalted virtues

by which they were nobly distinguished—whilst they traversed, as you and I now do, the sublunary path of this fleeting existence.

But if we venerate Mary—if we esteem and respect Mary—if we pray to the Saints who have gone before us, how and in what manner do we do it?—Why, by referring all the honor, all the veneration, all the respect and esteem we entertain both for her and for them, to God, and to God alone. Every act which is not purely and solely dedicated to God, is a merely human, and not a religious act. We know that the Saints are happy now with God, and that they can receive of no human courtesies. Religion is that which binds us to God—religion is that which unites us to God. Hence, says the holy St. Austin, religion takes its name from having the property of attaching us to, uniting us with, and binding us fondly and firmly to the service of God. All our devotion to Mary—all our reverence of Mary is vain, is futile, is even superstitious, if it do not lead us to God, the Author of every good, the Finisher of all that is noble and grand here below. How different, my brethren, was the worship and reverence paid by the pagans of old to their divinities! Unacquainted with the one incommunicable name of Deity, they divided their superior beings into numbers, giving some to the earth, some to the heavens, some to other elements, some even—with sorrow be it said—to the very iniquities that were inundating and destroying the fair face of the earth! Jupiter rules the heavens, and various other elements are assigned to numerous other inferior divinities. How dark, how profound must have been the night of pagan ignorance and barbarity, which the mind of man now regards with so much horror, as compared with that of our Saviour's coming, which we now reflect upon with so much satisfaction and pleasure; for how Godlike and brilliant was the light that burst upon the world at the blessed period when Mary, the mother of Jesus, gave birth to Him who came to enlighten all those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death, inciting us, with holy Paul, to give thanks to God for all those blessings which He has so beneficently and prodigally bestowed on us.

But while, my dear brethren, we esteem and respect Mary, we honor, we adore, and we pay homage only to the one true

and everliving God. We consider Him, and Him alone, as the only Sovereign God, from whom proceedeth every good and every perfect gift. We look upon Him, and Him alone, as being alone capable of bestowing on us those aids and those assistances that we so much need, and without whose assistance we ourselves can do nothing. We consider the Omnipotent as the only being that merits our homage and adoration, for well do we know what Jesus himself told Satan,—"Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God, and Him alone." When, therefore, we address ourselves to the Virgin Mary and to the Maid of Judah,—when we pour out our prayers to the Peters and the Pauls, and the spirits of the just, now made perfect, we merely make them the channels of communication with the highest and noblest of beings; in the same way that, here on earth, if we wished to obtain a favor from the highest peer in the realm—we should employ some one among those who well knew how to invoke him; after this very manner do we employ Mary and Peter and Paul to lay our petitions at the throne of the Almighty, never for one moment supposing that Mary, or Paul, or Peter, in themselves, have the power to help, to befriend, or to assist us.

Away, then, with the cry, for it is a cry frequently raised against the doctrine of the Catholic Church, that we are robbing the Almighty of His power,—that we are even taking away from the mediatorial influence of Jesus, when we make use of Mary and of the Pauls and Peters as our advocates with Heaven. Is it not to accuse the Almighty of immeasurable weakness, when we allege that he is jealous of our offering to the Virgin Mother of Jesus,—to the Maid of Judah,—to the great subduer of the enemy of souls,—Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles,—when we apply to them as our mediators and intercessors? Is it not to accuse God Himself, the Omnipotent, of weakness,—to suppose, for a moment, that a feeling of jealousy and envy of the little praise we bestow upon them could ever enter into His divine composition? Were the grand luminary, now shedding his powerful beams upon you, capable of becoming like ourselves a reasonable being, endued with the power of speech, as we ourselves possess it, think you that he, who is now passing along the firmament from the eastern to the western sky, would, could the powers I have spoken of become his own, be envious and

jealous, because at the close of his brilliant career he saw his sister luminary of the night shining less powerfully, though perhaps with a more pleasing brilliancy? Would he not remember that, whatever reflection she might make upon the earth—whatever light or beauty she might bestow on the otherwise obscure paths of human existence, that they were all derived from him? and instead of jealousy and envy taking possession of his bosom, a feeling of exultation and joy would alone escape from his lips? So is it also with the Omnipotent. If we pray to Mary—if we offer our orisons to Paul and to Peter, it is simply as being the works of God's own hand; it is simply as being the offspring of His good example and inexhaustible power; it is simply because we see in them things with which we know that He is well pleased, who now live in the halo of His brightness, in the kingdom of His love, in which they are never to be separated from the beatific vision which we all hopefully look forward to.

My brethren, if we are in error, as we are told we are, in thus offering our orisons to the saints—if we are in error in invoking their mediation and powerful aid, we are glad to find ourselves in company with the Austins, the Chrysostoms, the Basils, the Gregories, and all those great and illustrious ones who, during the first five centuries, at a time which even our Protestant brethren allow was the time of primitive purity and spotless Christianity—at a time when the true faith and law of Christ was not only known but practised—we are glad to find ourselves in company with those illustrious men whose writings are known to them as well as to ourselves—men whose high and exalted names are recognised by them as they are by ourselves.

But whilst, my brethren, we worship one God, and but one, we acknowledge only one Mediator, and that is Christ Jesus the Lord. Through His sacred and adorable name we acknowledge that we have been washed from original sin in the name of our baptism; through His sacred and adorable name we also acknowledge that our sins and faults—provided we are truly and sincerely repentant—will be, and shall be, washed away; well do we know that it is only through His adorable and holy name that salvation can be obtained. To Him only do we look up in the hour of difficulty and danger, as being the hand that can be uplifted to raise us from our miserable, forlorn, desolate, and sinful

condition; to Him only do we give thanks, praise, glory, honor, for having upon Calvary, by the effusion of His sacred and Divine blood, washed away our sinful stains, and reconciled us to Himself—restoring us again to the friendship and favor of our offended Master. We allow, my brethren, but one Mediator with these omnipotent and these incommunicable powers; but we allow many others to possess influence with this great and omnipotent Master; we allow many others to be the handmaids of His great and important works here, to be the channels through which His bounties flow, to be the means by which He communicates to us peace and grace, which, perhaps even unmeritedly, are still in copious store showered down upon us. But remember, however deeply you may venerate Mary,—however highly you may think of the spirits of the just made perfect,—however often you may raise your hands to them and ask them to intercede for you, all this will be futile, useless, vain, unless you perform the still grander and more important act, to show that what you inwardly believe, you also outwardly profess. You may honor the Virgin Mother of Jesus, and why? Is it to add any ray to her diadem, or any gem to her crown? She is now, if I may use the expression, luxuriating in the blisses of her Divine Son. How, then, ought we to address ourselves to her, that we may be animated to follow her example; that we may, by pondering over her sacred and exalted virtues, learn not only to imitate them, but to make them completely our own; to be animated amid suffering, trial, and tribulation; to walk as she did, and, if necessary, to stand at the foot of the cross for a dying parent, for the nearest, dearest, and tenderest friend, as she stood at the feet of Jesus on Mount Calvary! In vain will be the prayers of Mary, my brethren, unless you imitate her example. "But I cannot," you will tell me. You will never be raised to the same exalted dignity with her; you will never enjoy the special prerogative that fell to her share; but you may, and you must, if you would live with her in heaven, follow and copy the virtue which was so particularly her distinguishing feature,—her humility, her lowliness, her self-abasement: "*Sine virginitate potest*," says St. Bernard. "*Sine humilitate non potest.*" You may, without virginity; you may, if you are called to the marriage-state; you may, without virginity, obtain

the Kingdom of Heaven, and please God; but without humility, says this great follower of Mary, you cannot please God.

Tell me not, then, my brethren, that you cannot make this—her delightful and distinguishing virtue—your own. Her Son has declared that he who exalts himself shall be humbled; but if, on the contrary, he is humbled, he shall be exalted and enter on the enjoyments of everlasting life. Vain are the prayers that you offer to Martyrs, unless you endeavor to imitate their example and fill your souls with the same noble and sublime maxims of faith; vain are all the prayers that you offer to Confessors and Pontiffs of old, whose names now stand emblazoned in the calendar of the Church, unless you imitate their piety, their sanctity, their devotion, and their love. Vain will be all the prayers you offer to the saints and the spirits of the just made perfect, now with Jesus in the kingdom of His love, unless you also imitate their fidelity, their purity, their religion, and their love of God. And then, my brethren, no matter whatever may be your denomination, whether belonging to the one true and only Church of Christ Jesus, or still wandering in the darksome paths of error, obscurely creeping in the way without scarcely knowing to what you attach yourselves, let me implore both one and the other that you will this morning, ere you go from this sacred temple, in the presence of the altar on which Jesus, the Son of Mary, is about to be immolated as on Mount Calvary, though in a human manner, bow down before the altar of your Jesus and ask Him to give you charity to bear with the pains, the frailty, the sinfulness of your fellow-creatures; ask of Him to give you patience to support the various calumnies which are so constantly brought against you; and you, my dissenting brethren, ask of the same God—for you believe in His holy and adorable power—ask Him to open your eyes, that you may no longer sit in darkness and the shadow of death; ask of Him, if still you doubt, to solve these doubts; to remove the film from your eyes, and send you some good, some holy, some pious instructor.

Oh, then, let us all, forgetting past feuds, dissensions, and disquietudes, let us unite in one grand object, that of following out the object which Jesus declares shall be the distinguishing mark by which his disciples are known—"that ye have love one for

another." Go, then, you, my Catholic brethren, go to the Virgin Mother of Jesus and implore her aid in the hour of difficulty and danger. The historic page, whether in the third, fifth, ninth, tenth, or even in the degenerate nineteenth century, will furnish you with proofs, will point you to innumerable instances of the exalted power of Mary when she has been invoked by the humble and contrite of heart. Oh, we know by every day's experience the truth of the words of the great and pious St. Bernard: "None, O Mary, ever have recourse to thy intercession that are not recompensed and satisfied by the grace of God whispering to them." Go, then, my brethren, and remember, that if you do bow down before the Virgin, that if you do implore the assistance of the Maid of Nazareth and the Virgin of Judah, it is not to rob my God of any honor—it is not to give her the power of a mediator—which Jesus, and Jesus only, possesses—but it is to ask her to use the influence she possesses with her Divine Son, to ask Him to change the stony heart to something more delightful and more full of virtue, to change that which is now corrupted into incorruption, and to give to those now wandering in the darksome paths of error that light which shall lead to the haven of eternal rest.

Come, then, my beloved brethren, and bow down before her shrine. We will implore and invoke her assistance; we will say, "Listen to us, Mary; hear our prayer! O Mary, pour out thy influence at the throne of thy Divine Son, and obtain for us those graces, those blessings, of which we stand so much in need!" and then may we proclaim to an astonished world that there is no foundation on which we build than on that of her Son, Christ Jesus. Do Thou, then, O Sacred Son of Mary—Thou who comest, not to destroy, but to save all mankind, listen to us this morning imploring Thy assistance. We, perhaps, are like those spirits in the Gospel, covered with the leprosy of sin. Extend Thy hand and cleanse us. Like the blind—oh, cause the light of God, like faith, to shine upon our eyesight—raise us into newness of life, preach to us the Gospel of consolation while here, so as to secure to us an eternal reward hereafter. Give us grace never to be scandalized in Thee or to be a scandal to our religion. Shower, then, down, O Jesus! these Thy powerful aids. As we advance in years, let us become more and

more happy in Thy service here, until the time arrive when we shall be called from this perishable state of existence to Thine eternal tabernacle, with these words of delightful import: "Come, thou spouse of Christ, receive the habitation prepared for thee from the foundation of the world!"

Sermon.

How to return the Love which God bestows upon us.

"Whether is easier to say, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee:' or to say, 'Arise and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said he to the sick of the palsy,) 'Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house.' And he arose and went into his house."—St. Matthew ix. 5, 6, 7.

Your Saviour, then, beloved brethren, had the power and will to forgive. Here is a signal proof of it. A man is brought to him for relief, externally loaded with the bodily affliction of a palsy; and who should this be but one whose inward guilt had been the cause of all he had suffered? Well, then, dear Lord, thou seest this miserable man before thee, who has frequently presumed to offend thee by his sinful life, and who would probably continue to offend thee, had not thy vengeance overtaken him by this affliction, and thus humbled him to apply to thee for pardon. Canst thou, wilt thou, O Lord Jesus, pardon a sinner who has so long denied thee? Yes, says our Saviour, *Have a good heart; Son, thy sins are forgiven thee.* O Lord of mercy, we hear thee declare this, and we believe! But this is not all we implore! It is easy to promise forgiveness; even we can say, "I forgive;" but who can suppress or reject the consequences of resentment? Without this, of what utility is the word forgiveness? If, then, thou meanest more by pardon than mere outward appearance, do thou vouchsafe to make us sensible in what it consists, and how it appears.

That you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, says Christ, turning to the sick of the palsy; Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose and went into his house. Thus, Christians, thus was it that

Christ expressed forgiveness to sinners. He did not manifest his forgiveness in vain, unmeaning words, but in the banishment of resentment. Those whom he pardoned, he pardoned in reality; he not only forbore to punish, but he restored to them all his former marks of affection, and heaped fresh favors upon them. If you are of his disciples, you must thus forbear towards those who sin against you.

Think not to excuse yourselves from this important duty, by imagining that you cannot do it.

If you, like Christ, your heavenly Master, have the inclination, you will find the practice within your power, for he, like you, was man, and the Son of man, and although upon this occasion he called his Godhead to his assistance to give effect to his forgiveness, it was also to prove and to make manifest *that the Son of man hath power*, as well as the Son of God, *to forgive sins* committed against himself.

In short, this, like all the miracles your Saviour performed throughout his life, was designed as a practical lesson, to lead you to the perfect love of God, by a real charity towards your neighbor. And in order to enforce it the more completely, he tells you soon after, "*Go your ways, and learn what it is; I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*" Ah! Christians, all the prayers, fasts, and sacrifices you can offer to him will be unacceptable, if mercy to each other be omitted. And even this, to be an offering worthy of his acceptance, must be extended to all mankind; to friends, to strangers, to enemies, without the exception of one person, and without the exclusion of one friendly office in your power.

I shall now endeavor to appeal to your hearts, and urge them to this essential duty from principles of gratitude; by pointing out to you the infinite mercies which God has manifested to each of you, and for which you have no other means to be grateful to him than by practising mercy to all mankind for his sake, and to your utmost extent. To do this, I shall prove to you—

First, The great tenderness of affection you ought to bear to your neighbors, both strangers and friends, in the immense love which your God has expressed towards you; and,

Secondly, I shall exhibit to you the extensive and perfect forgiveness you should practise towards your offending neigh-

bors, through the infinite and the repeated mercies of God, in granting forgiveness to you.

Hence, if your souls be not flinted into obduracy, which God forbid, you will plainly see how easily and delightfully you may practically perform both these duties.

"But thou alone, dear Lord, canst melt the hearts of these my hearers with the important truths I utter. In vain shall I labor to plant or to sow thy sacred doctrine, unless thou waterest with thy grace the soil. Do thou, then, give the increase, and kindly warm the souls of all persons with that fraternal charity which I preach, and by which alone they can yield the fruits of thy eternal life!"

Man has no other means to express his love and gratitude to God, for the immense love and charity which he has manifested to him, than to practise all the acts of mercy and charity in his power towards his fellow-creature. However common the proverb may appear, yet it is still an eternal truth, that *one good turn deserves another*. Every favor, then, which God bestows upon man, at any time, places him under an absolute debt of gratitude to make him all the return in his power. And God's eternal justice requires him to exert his utmost industry to do it. But this he cannot do in coin, if I may be permitted the use of the term; that is, man cannot do to God the good which God has done to him, nor can he even do any real good. The infinite excellence of the Almighty's nature places him far above the reach of human benefits. Yet the obligation man is under equally exists; therefore, with regard to Divine favors, man is born, lives, and must necessarily die an insolvent debtor.

One of the ineffable favors which God has bestowed upon us useless servants, is the possessing with his grace, which is ever at our call, the power and free will to do some good. Therefore, as that good is a real and positive action, it must have a real and positively passive object in which to terminate. For all the good that is or can be done, must be to communicate; consequently some one must benefit by it. God, as I observed before, is too immensely happy in himself, from all eternity, to derive advantage from the good he requires us to practise in return for the good he has done for us; and therefore it is that he mercifully substitutes our neighbors to receive the benefit, in

order that we may have it in our power thus to repay him the debt we owe, and reap the benefit of each other's gratitude to him. This, then, is the return which God requires of you for all the infinite good he has done for you, that for his sake *you love one another even as he has loved you.* This, you see, is the only means you have to prove yourselves grateful to him for that love. O my God, how numerous and how great are the proofs which thou hast given us of thy ineffable affection! Christians, thousands, millions, nay, innumerable and infinite are the blessings your Lord has bestowed upon you. His love is not the love of mere words, but it is a love of action. With God it is one and the same thing to wish well and to do it.

It was this love which gave you the being you enjoy, which impressed upon it his own likeness, and enriched it with all that might make it a happy creation. He gave you an immortal soul, and endowed it with will, memory, and understanding. He gave you a body, and instilled into it life, spirits, and sensation, and formed both to be instrumental to the felicity of each other. In return for this, it is true that you cannot create beings like yourselves: that is an action which requires an infinite power, and you are but finite, limited creatures; consequently, that is a return which is not expected from you. But surely you may make use of the limited powers and faculties which you have, to contribute as much as you possibly can to the happiness of other beings which God has created, and with the design that they should be as happy as yourselves.

It is evident, then, that should you oppose their happiness, or neglect any thing in your power to promote it, it must be a contradiction to the ineffable design of God in creating you and them, and be a base, ungrateful use of the life which he has so graciously given you for that end.

It was the infinity of his love for you, beloved brethren, which induced him to exert his omnipotence in the production of so many stupendous works of nature. Why did he create the heavens, the planets, the earth, the waters, the fields, the animals, and all that is beneath you, but for your use and delight? Nay, all mankind was made for you, and you for them, that you might enjoy the pleasure and benefits arising from society: all these are the beauteous works of a beneficent God—all these

are the kind effects of his almighty love for you. He had no advantage to derive, his heaven was eternal in himself, and his own Divine immensity is sufficient for him and his angels, without any other existence. For you, then, were all these created. All are the benefactions of that great Lord who is love for you, who chose to express his love by this vast profusion of favors to you, in order that you, excited by this excess of bounty, might endeavor to imitate so much affection, by striving for his sake to render common to all your fellow-creatures the earthly advantages you receive from him.

Truly, O Almighty God! thy immense wisdom and goodness did not create this vast and spacious earth for a small number of us reptile creatures, so that we might deprive others of these blessings. No, thou didst design it for all, that all might socially and mutually enjoy thy blessings. And, my beloved brethren, how numerous are the benefits which God bestows upon you all without distinction, to enable you to answer this great purpose. Many of these blessings you do not perceive, many you do not reflect upon; and many—nay, almost an infinite number of those of which you are sensible, yet for which you have never thanked him, nor for which you have ever manifested the least acknowledgment. What more could your beneficent Lord do to induce you to love him than what he has done? What less could he demand of you in proof of your love, than to do that good to each other which he affords you the power and means to do, and which he is above receiving himself.

So great is the affection your Almighty Sovereign bears to you, that, not satisfied with heaping favors upon you as his creatures, he has even vouchsafed to bend his glory to accept of you for friends, and, in order to cement a strict alliance with you, he graciously entered into a covenant of love with you, by which you might partake with him his eternal bliss. Nay, after you had foolishly and basely forfeited his friendship, he sent his only begotten Son to reinstate you, at the immense expense of his most painful death!

O, too loving God! what couldst thou see in us poor, vile, ignoble creatures, so worthy of thy love that thou couldst stoop thy awful majesty, and that of thy eternal Son, to court our friendship? What pleasure or what benefit couldst thou propose

from an alliance with worms like us? Ah! Christians, God was too happy in himself from all eternity, before all things were created, to want any thing from you. He generously chose you for his friends, that you might, in return for so much goodness, be friends to one another for his sake. "*You are my friends*," says your disinterested Lord, "*if you do what I command you.*" And what does he command you more, as a proof of your friendship, but that *you love one another, even as he has loved you.* And how, beloved brethren, has he loved you as his friends? Why, by assisting and helping you to all which affords you safety, ease, profit, and delight; eternal and even temporal.

You yourselves possess nothing in or out of yourselves that is in any sense good, but what is immediately derived from God. By him it is you exist, move, live, and breathe; you can neither do, say, think, nor wish anything but in and by him. It is he who guards you whilst asleep, and watches over you when awake; it is he who gives success to what you undertake; it is he who comforts you under disappointments.

From him alone proceed all your means of sustenance, and all the possessions you enjoy. In fact, on every side he most graciously bestows favors upon you, in order to make your obstinate, unyielding hearts melt into love towards him. And all the proof which he requires from you is, that you should for his sake bestow upon your friends the small favors you have in your power, as a return for his immense blessings.

Immense, indeed! and had they been no more extensive than I have mentioned, small indeed would be the return you could make. But, ah! to how much greater an extent did he carry his affection! When you had forfeited that bliss for which he created you, he spared no means to reinstate you in your former right, and prove himself your friend by the most signal instance which a God could give. To effect this, he sent his only begotten Son to ransom you, that you might live by him. Oh, inimitable goodness of God! To remedy your evils, he did not offer the life of an angel, a seraphim, or a whole legion of seraphic spirits. No; so well he loved you, O mortals! that he delivered what was worth more than the united lives of all the choirs of heaven. He disdained to give any thing less than something of his own, something of himself—and that was nothing less than his eter-

nal Son, of as immense a value as his Godhead. He gave him without the least interest to himself, and he exposed him to the cruel, to the ignominious death of the cross, out of pure love to you, whom he condescended to look down upon as friends. And with what cheerfulness did this Son of God submit to all the sufferings and humiliation with which savage cruelty could load him; and all to show how much you ought to do for each other.

"No man," says your Lord, "can have a greater charity for his friends than he who gives up his life for them." Yet even here your gracious Benefactor did not rest, but went so far as to leave that precious blood as a perpetual source of grace and aid for you. Oh, liberality unbounded! Oh, unexhausted fountain of prodigious love! Ah, where is the monarch who would devote to death his guiltless, only son,—a son whom he loved to the utmost extent,—out of mere friendship to his vassals? Where is the prince who would generously offer to seal a friendship between his father and his subjects with his blood? Where is the man who would consent to part with but one cup of his blood to quench the thirst of those whom he loved the most? Yet this your God and Saviour has graciously done for you and me. Ah, Christians! shall not our souls melt and be filled with grateful love to him? Shall God, after having proved his love to us by such stupendous charity, demand of us only the slight return of love to each other, to the utmost of our power, *even as he has loved us;* and shall we have the power to refuse him this little proof of gratitude? Should we give up all that we have, in charity to others; should we give up all our time, ease, liberty, and person, to acts of mercy towards our neighbors; in short, should we sacrifice our lives for them, should we do too much to correspond to that love which God has manifested towards us? Should every single life of ours be worth the lives of all the angels, and should each one sacrifice that life for one single man, the victim offered would fall infinitely short of the invaluable sacrifice which God first made for us. His was the infinite benevolence of a gracious God, to his unserviceable creatures; ours would be but a finite acknowledgment to God of the infinite debt we owe to him.

Christians, how can you think without humbling upon your deficiency in love towards God, in return for the infinite love he

has manifested towards you? You have no means to show your gratitude to him, but by the love you express to your fellow-creatures. With what tender affection ought you to love and serve your friends, your acquaintance, and all mankind! How eager you ought to be, to serve, assist, and comfort them, to rejoice with them in their innocent pleasures, to condole with and to compassionate them in their sorrows, to relieve them in need, to visit them when sick or imprisoned, to instruct them when ignorant, to counsel them when in the wrong, to hide and excuse their failings, to publish their just praise; in short, to do all the good offices in your power for them, and to avoid as much as possible the giving them any just offence! Can you do less than this for the sake of him who has done so much for you? Every one of the infinite favors which God has bestowed upon you is a debt you owe to him, and his divine justice demands all the return you can make. Now, since you are incapable of doing him the good he has done to you, and since he has transferred his right in all the advantages of the little good you can do, to your neighbors, as he cannot be benefited by it himself, surely, the least you can do is, out of love and obedience to him, to do them all the good you can. This he has declared his positive will; this he insists upon, as the essential proof of your gratitude towards him; and this he declares to be the only means you have of showing that you belong to him. *In this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.*

How then can you, my beloved brethren, pretend to be disciples of your loving Saviour, how can you show your gratitude to your beneficent God, if you can see his images, your neighbors, whom he has commanded you to love, suffer, and not relieve them—naked, and not clothe them? What is your charity, if you can know that so many of your fellow-creatures are in prison, and you never set your feet within one to visit them; if you can hear of so many widows and orphans who are hungry and in ignorance, and you put yourselves to no inconvenience to feed or to instruct them? Will mere good wishes, do you think, suffice to discharge your duty of loving all these persons as Christ loved you? Had he limited his friendship for you to mere inactive wishes, how much more miserable

would you be than the most wretched of your fellow-creatures, upon whom you look with so much contempt and neglect.

But perhaps to your friends, my beloved brethren, your own nature will incline you to be charitable. As to others, you exclaim, they are not of your acquaintance, you never heard of them before, or they are strangers, or foreigners, they do not agree with you in religion, in politics, or that you do not like their character. Alas! are their distresses the less on that account, or are you the less bound to love them with the tender bowels of fraternal charity? Oh, no! this is the vain excuse of your hard hearts. Of whatever religion, nation, or personal worth a person in distress may be, he is still your neighbor; he is the image and creature of God, whether known or unknown to you. If he be virtuous, you relieve one of God's favorites; if he be vicious, you may gain a soul to God; and, if unsuccessful, yet, by preserving him from perishing, you do no more than what the mercy of God sets the example, *who causes the sun to shine on the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust.* All mankind, then, good or bad, acquaintances or strangers, are your fellow-creatures, are images of your eternal Benefactor, and out of gratitude to him, they are entitled to all the charitable offices you can render them. To love your neighbors with that charity which God has expressed to you, you are to love them for his sake, without regard to any amiable qualities they may possess. What amiable qualities did God find in you, when first he vouchsafed to love you? It was when, you being buried in the dark abyss of nothing, that God cast his beneficent eyes upon you. Nevertheless, in this poor, despicable situation he condescended to love you, and, moved by affection, drew you from thence, to enrich you with life and many natural gifts. When you came into this world, what were you in the sight of God but a vessel? When you came into the world, what were you in his sight but an incorrupt vessel of original sin? Yet he carried on his affection for you, washed you with his precious blood, clothed you with his grace, and fed you with his sacred body. O gracious God! what an excess of love was this to strangers, to wretches, to worms, void of all that is lovely, full of every thing that is odious in thy sight! For shame, then, Christians, forbear to talk of strangers,

plead not such frivolous excuses for your scandalous want of charity. Of all your fellow-creatures, none can be more strange, nor have less to recommend themselves to you, than you had to make yourselves acceptable to God before you were created, and before you were regenerated. May Heaven grant that this be not true in some sense with you at this time. Alas! too many of you, I fear, were not only estranged from God from the very wombs of your mothers, but are even so at this very moment; for of what a number of Christians may not God complain, as he did of the Jews: *these people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.* Yet which of all you whose hearts are estranged from God by your criminal pursuits, find his mercy totally estranged from you? Does he not still protect you, does he not still provide for you? Does he not still visit you with his inspirations and calls to repentance? and, as slow in anger as he is terrible in wrath, does he not still preserve you from dying in the reprobate condition in which you are, by the hope of overcoming your obstinacy with his goodness? How, then, can you refuse to practise works of mercy to such of your fellow-creatures as stand in need of your assistance, under the pretext of being strangers to you, or on account of their failing in any amiable qualities to recommend them to your love? Know you not that God has transferred to every one of your fellow-creatures his own right in all the advantages of the good you are able to do in return for his love?

Can you forget that he has told you, that *what you do to the least of them you do to him.* Thus, then, it is impossible for you to be grateful to him without bearing an unbounded affection to all mankind, strangers as well as friends—I had almost said enemies too; and if I had, I should not have exceeded the truth. The example which I have just given you of God's patience with such of you as are actually his enemies, is sufficient of itself to prove that you cannot love each other, as he has loved you, without practising a sincere and perfect charity even to the worst of your enemies. O my God! is there any need to suffer longer the ingratitude of us sinful wretches, to prove this excessive love to us, even when we were thy basest enemies? No, Christians; were he to thunder down upon every sinner his ven-

geance on the very instant of his offending him, yet in the numerous and prodigious demonstrations which he has already given of his forgiveness to you, after having so grossly and so frequently insulted him, you would have more than sufficient to place you under an eternal obligation to practise the nicest charity to your neighbors, let them injure you ever so frequently or ever so seriously.

It must be confessed that God has signalized his love for you to the utmost excess in suffering so many affronts and insults which your sins have caused. Surely, I say, it must be owned that his love for you was unlimited, since he condescended to forgive so many base injuries from miserable worms like us. God is not insensible to the heinousness of them; he sees them all; knows how opposite they are to the greatness of his majesty, and detests them with the greatest abhorrence. He does not, like you, stifle his resentment because he has not the power of revenge. No; he could, and can, whenever he pleases, create a thousand hells for any one of you, the very moment you offend him; instead of which he has been pleased, not only to bear with ineffable meekness and benevolence all your ingratitude, but even to have compassion on you who have thus basely treated your chief, your only Benefactor. Ah! when was there known a monarch who, having the power to punish with the utmost rigor of justice such of his vassals as had often attempted to betray him, who not only forbore to punish them, but even loaded them with fresh proofs of his favor? Yet, thus has God acted towards you.

Ah! how many treacheries and infidelities has he borne with from you, and yet continued his benevolence to you! Every sin you have committed has been a horrible conspiracy against the honor and dignity of your divine Sovereign; and oh! how often has he put up with such treasons from you; and not only has he abstained to inflict the eternal chastisement due to your rashness and baseness, but has even heaped upon you innumerable favors! Ah, Christians, what return can you make to God for all his mercy, less than that which he requires of you, of bearing with the lesser injuries which you receive from your fellow-sinner, and of returning all the good you can practise for all the evil you can receive. No matter whatever abuse your

neighbors may heap upon you: that is but a finite offence, and therefore can never amount to the greatness of the injury you offer to God in every single mortal sin, which is an infinite offence, because it is an insult offered to an infinite Being, to whom you have infinite obligations. What say you, Christians? You are ready to be reconciled to your enemies, if they will make the first advances, that you may forgive them? O my God! hadst thou waited until we were first converted to thee, before thou hadst advanced towards us with thy converting mercy, how should we have obtained forgiveness? No; God sees the inflexibility of your hearts in sin, and how little disposed you are of yourselves to treat with him for a reconciliation; he therefore graciously sends you his invitation to repentance, as if he stood in need of your friendship; whereas he was eternally happy before you were created, and would be equally so if you should all perish. Can you, then, O stubborn mortals, refuse to melt into mercy at the sight of so much generosity? Can you refuse to make the first advances towards a reconciliation with such of your equals by nature as have offended you, when your God can condescend to make the first advances towards a reconciliation with you, who are his creatures, infinitely beneath him, and who have infinitely offended him? You have no other means than these to show your gratitude to God for such infinite generosity or to pay the debt it lays you under. How immensely great is his goodness in putting it thus into your power to discharge so infinite a debt! Alas! although the enmity of your neighbors should level at all your substance, your peace, your reputation, your life, and all that is dear to you—it would still fall short of your enmity to God in one mortal sin. Every mortal sin of yours cost no less than the death of his Divine Son. Oh, how patient, how forgiving would you think an earthly sovereign, who should not be tired of pardoning a treacherous subject; who, after having been loaded with all the favors he could bestow upon him, had cruelly murdered ten of his children! Yet, how much greater is the patience and forgiveness which God has manifested towards you, in forgiving you after having murdered, not ten, but perhaps hundreds and hundreds of times, his Divine, his only, his dearly

beloved Son, by the mortal sins you have committed against his commandments, every one of which was in its nature a fresh crucifixion of Jesus Christ, who died on a shameful, painful cross, for every sin in particular which you have committed! This is a patience, a forgiveness which could find place alone in the heart of a God infinitely in love with us. And how much greater does his affection appear to us than to the angels!

In them he would not even put up with the first offences, but condemned whole millions, legions of them, to eternal misery for one single insult; and yet he not only patiently endures thousands of insults from each of us, but invites us to renew a strict friendship with him, by the most endearing invitations. O my God! what return shall we make to thee for all this immensity of love? What dost thou say, gracious Lord? "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you.*" Yes, my heavenly Lord, I hear thee, but what is this to the infinite obligations we owe to thee? They have offended us but finitely, and we have infinitely offended thee. What, then, can our forgiveness be to them in comparison of thine to us? Thou art the Infinite Being to whom we owe the utmost charity, and how, alas! can they supply thy place? "No matter, such is my heavenly, gracious condescension," says the Almighty, "that I appoint them to receive the effects of your charity. Therefore, *what you do to one of the least of mine, you have done to me.*" O Christians! what unparalleled goodness does God display in this all-gracious condescension. Thus does he afford you the means to discharge yourselves of the great debt you owe to him. He has exerted all the infinity of his wisdom, power, and goodness, to do you good in quality of his friends. Nay, before you could be so, while you were strangers to him, buried in the darkness of nothing, he testified his affection by drawing you from thence, and raising you to the power of becoming his friends, and courted you to it by all the benefactions which so merciful a God could bestow upon you. Oh, who but God would not have withheld his bounty after the abuse of so many favors? But your all-merciful God, as though he had been insensible of all your baseness to him, as though he had

been pleased with being insulted, has still returned all your baseness with fresh proofs of unutterable love, spared no expense, not even the death—the cruel, the shameful death—of his divine, beloved, only-begotten Son, to reinstate you in your right to that eternal bliss for which he made you, and of which you proved yourself so undeserving. And all this only to overcome your vileness with his bounty, and make you happy against your inclinations.

Shall he not succeed, then, Christians, after all this excess of love? Shall it be said that he who has loved you to such an extreme shall ask no other return of you, than that for his sake, *you love one another*, to the utmost of your power, *even as he has loved you*, and shall he be yet refused? Shall he have done so much for you, when strangers to him, nay, when odious to him, and you refuse a charitable tenderness to strangers in distress? Shall he have loved and treated you as friends, and shall not you treat your neighbors as such, or shall you love your friends with mere outside show? Shall he have pardoned you such infinite offences, nay, added to his pardon such ineffable effects of his mercy, and you continue your resentment to your neighbors for every slight offence. If revenge appear so sweet to you, beloved brethren, do not forget that you are creatures, and that you ought to give the preference to God. He has not yet revenged the blood of his eternal Son, and until he does, your vengeance must be out of place. Shall worms like you take the place of God? No; while he forgives, it is your bounden duty to do so; and not in mere expression, but, like him, in fact indeed. It is an easy thing to pretend forgiveness; but *which is easier*, as my text expresses, to say to your neighbor, "*Your sins are forgiven you*, as far as relates to me," or to prove that you are in earnest by withdrawing the effects of your resentment, and by reinstating him in your favor with renewed benefits? It was thus your Saviour in this gospel gave proofs of his forgiveness, and thus must you confirm your own. This is the only means by which you can make a grateful return to God for all the love he has shown to you. This he expressly requires of you, *that you love one another, even as he has loved you.* And by this love alone, he tells you that *all men shall know you are his disciples.*

If you are not his disciples in vain, he has redeemed you; and if you are, by *loving one another as he has loved you*, you will reap the benefit of being such, which is *to live by him;* for to this end alone did he come into the world, says St. John, that you *might live by him* a life of grace on earth, and a life of eternal glory in heaven.

Father McCarthy's Sermon,

On the Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

THE Church is pleased, in her most pathetic solemnities, to unite our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy mother, from which union we are to understand that they must not be separated in our love: and next to the supreme worship due to our Divine Redeemer, nothing is dearer or more sacred than the worship of veneration and honor due to the Queen of Virgins. Let us, then, enter into the views of this holy Church, which the Spirit of God guides.

I am not ignorant that, in this age of pride and impiety, there are found, even among those who call themselves the faithful, blind and haughty spirits, who contemptuously leave the devotion of which the Mother of God is the object, to credulous and ignorant persons. It is on this account that I feel myself called upon to take up boldly the defence of it, and to prove that there is no devotion more solid, more conformable to the principles of Christianity, or more worthy of educated and lofty minds.

Brethren, it is not to the enemies of religion that I now address myself: those who blaspheme Jesus Christ, would be slow to understand the duty of honoring his mother. I appeal to the disciples of the gospel, to the children of the church, who know how to adore and to believe; and if there be amongst them any, estranged by the sophisms of a few rash critics, who have entertained unjust prejudices against the worship which we pay to the Blessed Virgin, I hope to undeceive them by this discourse, and to convince them that they cannot have too great a veneration, nor too much zeal for so holy a worship. Why? Because, in the first place, it is a worship which the most sacred, the most imposing authorities, in the sight of faith, oblige them

to respect; secondly, because it is a worship which the most weighty, the most urgent motives, even in the sight of reason, make it a duty to practise. Such is the subject which I purpose to explain; a subject which is binding upon all that is great and affecting in religion, and which only can deeply interest sensible minds and Christian souls.

In the first point of view: "Why," do the wayward critics say to us, "are those extraordinary honors lavishly bestowed everywhere upon the Virgin Mary? Ought our zeal for her glory to know neither dimensions nor limits? Let us revere her, especially for the extraordinary privileges which she has received, and for the admirable virtues which she has practised. But is it necessary that our temples should resound continually with her praises; that the incense should continually rise before her image, and that her name should be intermingled in all our prayers? Is there neither abuse nor excess to fear in all these popular devotions, so multiplied in our times? Instead of encouraging them from the pulpits, should we not do better to imitate the reserve and circumspection so remarkable in the holy writings, where so little is mentioned of the Virgin?" They say again, that the wisdom of the apostles appears to have kept them silent upon the subject in their ministrations; the wisdom of the primitive church and the ancient fathers have, they assure us, been so careful in thus praising her and appointing public homage to her, lest the Christian people, recently converted from the errors of paganism, should attribute, through a vestige of superstition, divinity to the mother of God made man.

Brethren, it is thus they pretend to oppose to us the authority of the sacred writings, that of the first preachers of the gospel, the beautiful ages of the church, and the venerable doctors who were the lights and ornaments of her. But far from admitting that these venerable and sacred authorities are opposed to us, we appeal to them ourselves, and we will confidently reproduce them, to prove that the spirit which inspired the prophets and apostles, which animated the church from her commencement, and which directed the pen of her wisest and most learned doctors, is the same which even to the present day inspires that religious respect, that tender piety towards the Virgin Mary, with which they would upbraid us as a weakness.

But, in the first place, how dare they assert that the holy books say little of the Blessed Virgin? St. Bernard, then, misinterpreted those writings; he who believed them to be filled with her praises; he who saw Mary both in the promises made to the patriarch, in the oracles of the prophets, and in a number of mysterious signs and miracles which typified her: *Maria patribus cœlitus repromissa....mysticis præfigurata miraculis.... oraculis præmentiata propheticis;* he who said with so much confidence: "Read, meditate upon the Holy Scriptures, and, as I do, you will find the blessed Mary everywhere therein: *Scrutare Scripturas, et proba quæ dico.*" In fact, my brethren, let us open the most ancient of these sacred volumes, that in which all the wonders of the creation are recounted, and, with the origin of the world, that of man and religion, what shall we find, even in the first page? The fatal fall of the authors of the human race, seduced by the old serpent; and immediately after that, the grand and solemn promise of a coming Redeemer, which has given, for four thousand years, all the consolation and hope of the unhappy race of Adam. Then observe carefully in what terms this divine promise is conceived. Is Mary forgotten in it? Listen, I entreat you. The Lord said to the serpent: "*Ait Dominus Deus ad serpentem:* Because thou hast done this thing, *Quia fecisti hoc*, and that by woman thou hast introduced sin into the world, I will put enmities between thee and the woman; *Inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem;* she shall bring into the world a Son, who shall be the terror of thy race, and the destroyer of thy empire: *Inter semen tuum et semen illius;* and it is she who finally shall deprive thee of thy sting, shall crush thy head: *Ipsa conteret caput tuum.*"

Behold, now, my brethren, in the first of all the oracles issued from the mouth of God himself, Mary was announced and solemnly promised to the world with Jesus Christ; in him is the foundation of religion, of which all the other prophecies will be the fulfilment: *Mulierem....et semen illius.* She appears with him at the head of the book of Divine revelations—*In capite libri Scriptum est de me;* and is portrayed with the most noble and enchanting features, as the mother of the future Liberator of the world, and as a victorious queen who was to trample under her feet all the powers of hell; she is exhibited

forty centuries beforehand to the hope and desires, and, in the same book, to the love and veneration of the human race.

Now, hear Isaiah, predicting more plainly the great event to which is attached the salvation of the world. What does this prophet see? What is that prodigy which strikes him with astonishment, and to which he calls the attention of the house of David: *Audite ergo, domus David!* That sign which God himself was to give to his people, and which was to display all his power: *Dabit Dominus ipse vobis signum!* That sign, that prodigy, my brethren, is Mary; Mary and her productive virginity; Mary and her Divine maternity. "O house of David! the Lord himself shall give thee a virgin: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and she shall bring forth a son, who shall be called Emmanuel, which means 'God with us:' She shall be a virgin and the mother of a God—*Ecce, virgo concipiet et pariet filium, et vocabitur nomen ejus Emmanuel.*"

All the prophecies are full of magnificent representations, under which the Holy Spirit displays to us the blessed Mary. She is that precious rod out of the root of Jesse, which springs up like a divine flower, the Messiah: *Flos de radice ejus ascendet;* that land of blessing upon which the dew of heaven descends, and from which the Saviour of the world emanates: *Terra... germinet salvatorem:* she is the chaste and only spouse; the object of the ineffable love of her God: *Soror mea sponsa;* the glorious queen, whom angels contemplate with delight, seated at the right hand of her Son, whom they adore: *Astitit regina a dextris tuis.*

But, dismissing metaphors and ancient predictions, let us see if the gospel gives us less sublime notions of this Virgin. Ah! my brethren, read, and tell me what we ought to think of a mortal, towards whom the God of the universe sends a solemn embassy from the heavens: *Missus est angelus Gabriel a Deo ....ad virginem:* what ought we to think of a mortal whom the celestial messenger approaches with respect and contemplates with admiration, prostrating himself before her, saying: "I salute you, O ye full of grace:" *Ave gratia plena!* O ye in whom the God of Majesty dwells, *Dominus tecum;* and whom he has chosen out of all the daughters of Adam to be the object of his choicest blessings: *Benedicta tu in mulieribus!* What

an eulogium! and in the mouth of an angel! What ought we to think of a mortal who, by the virtue of the Most High with which she is invested, and by the all-powerful operation of the Holy Ghost who dwells within her, conceives the Incarnate Word in her chaste womb, and brings forth the Son of the Everlasting, made his own Son: *Quod nascetur ex te. . . .vocabitur filius Dei.* Oh, incomprehensible mystery! Oh, unexampled dignity of Mary! Proceed. Again, what do you read? That the simple sound of her voice, *ut facta est vox. . . .in auribus meis*, the Spirit of God spreads itself like a torrent around her, fills Elizabeth with the light of the prophets, and, communicating it to the very child, which she yet carries in her womb, makes the infant leap with a divine joy: *Exultavit in gaudio infans in utero meo.* Who ever heard speak of similar miracles? But what appears to me not less remarkable than all this, is the testimony which that very humble virgin herself adduces, when in the transport of her gratitude she exclaims, "Because he that is mighty hath done great things to me: *Fecit mihi magna qui potens est;* that, by the largeness of his promises, he has condescended, from the beginning of the world, to manifest her in the faith and respect of the patriarchs and ancient holy men: *Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros;* and that now, through the excess of his favors, he presents her to the homage of all future generations, who will never cease to call her blessed: *Ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.*" Behold, brethren, a part only of the picture which the gospel presents to us. Does it conceal the excellency of Mary?

But, add they, the Apostles have kept silent about the Virgin in their preaching. How, whilst the Evangelists were publishing so many wonders of her, should the Apostles have made it a rule not to speak of her? Who could admit so strange an anomaly? But what signify conjectures and reasonings!—have we not in our hands the most authentic monument of the instruction of the Apostles, the symbol of faith which they themselves prepared, which bears their name, and which we daily recite? In this short exposition of the fundamental points of Christianity, they could not say all. Great mysteries, important doctrines have been omitted in it:—Is it the same with Mary, and are her august prerogatives omitted? Was not Mary able

to find a place in the symbol of the Apostles? O! my brethren, what place does she occupy in it? who will not be ravished with astonishment! Her name is united with the adorable names of the Trinity; she appears between the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, not as a stranger in the midst of them, but as united to them by the most indissoluble and strict alliance, in the capacity of daughter, wife, and mother. Is it really true, my dear brethren, and do I say too much? Judge for yourselves, and weigh attentively those words, which you have probably repeated a thousand times without reflection: "I believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, the only Son of God the Almighty Father, conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Which means: "I believe one God begotten of God, and born of the Virgin Mary, the only Son of the Most High, and the true Son of Mary; of one substance with the eternal Father, and formed of the body of Mary; conceived of the Holy Spirit, conceived and born of Mary!" O! ye bonds—O! ineffable resemblance—O! elevation before which all the greatness of the blessed and even angels vanish! One God in Trinity, one God-man, and Mary his mother—there is almost the whole symbol: behold, what the Apostles taught, what they displayed in their holy preaching. Thus, my brethren, it is not only to praise, to honor Mary; it is not only to offer her the most profound veneration of the faithful; but it is to elevate her above all honor, all praise, all thought; and I do not hesitate to say, after those two apophthegms of the sacred formula of our faith, every effort of human eloquence to exalt that incomparable Virgin, all our eulogies and panegyrisms, with their so-called exaggerations, are only the feeble language of an insufficient admiration, which cannot attain to the lofty eminence on which the Blessed Virgin is placed.

But, it is again said to us, "Did not the Church in the early ages believe it to be a duty to practise reserve and sobriety in the homage which she rendered to Mary, lest, at that time, when men's minds were still imbued with pagan superstitions, they should confound so holy and privileged a creature with Divinity itself?" Should it be so, my dear brethren—should I admit that such a precaution was at that time necessary; should we not confess that it soon after ceased to be so, when paganism

and its errors had disappeared before the light of the gospel? But is it true that the Church, even at her origin, was so reserved as they assert, in the evidence of her piety towards the Mother of God? In answer to this question, let us produce facts; and because the conciseness of a discourse does not permit us to adduce all of them, let us select, from the history of remote ages, one remarkable fact, which may enable us to judge of all the others—which reunites, if I may thus express myself, in one single point, every primitive tradition, and single glance what were the sentiments of the clergy, of the people of the East and the West, of pastors, doctors, sovereign pontiffs, and councils, from the beginning, with respect to the Blessed Virgin.

Listen, my brethren:

The fourth century had just terminated; Nestorius had ascended the see of Constantinople; and his faith not being yet suspected, he peaceably ruled that vast Church, which Gregory of Nazianzen and Chrysostom had nourished with the milk of the most holy doctrine. Suddenly, the arch-heretic, concealed under sheep clothing, betrays himself from the height of his Episcopal throne, and, in the temple of the Lord, Nestorius uttered these strange words: "Let us not say that Mary is the mother of God, for fear that we should appear to make the Virgin a Goddess:" *Ne faciat Virginem deam;* or that we should resemble the pagans, who create their mothers into deities: *Ergo excusabilis gentilitas matres diis subintroducens.* At these words, the faithful auditory, which the hypocrisy of this language cannot delude, burst into murmuring; one courageous tongue boldly accuses the impious bishop of blasphemy; the priests and the auditory rush out of the holy place, and the congregation forsake the pastor; Constantinople is in trouble and alarm, as in a period of public calamity. Speedily, the report of the insult offered to Mary circulating abroad, the whole Christian world is disturbed. Africa, with the great Cyril of Alexandria, sends forth a shout of indignation; Asia and Europe respond to it; the holy Pope, Celestine, assembles the bishops of Italy, and, at their head, anathematizes the rising heresy and its author.

That is not all; a general council is convoked at Ephesus; the heads of the Church hasten from all parts to attend it; and

there, in that celebrated and magnificent church, which already bore the name of St. Mary, two hundred bishops, presided over by the legates of the Holy See, representing the whole Catholic Church, invoking the doctrine of all their predecessors from the time of the Apostles, pronounce the anathema and the sentence of deposition against the audacious broacher of new doctrines, who dared to attempt the glory of the Mother of God. The Assembly does not separate until the night is far advanced. But oh, devotion! oh, lively faith of those early ages! all the people were watching at the doors of this magnificent church, in the expectation of a judgment, which, so it appeared to them, was to regulate their faith. Scarcely is the victory of Mary published, than the city resounds with plaudits and songs of joy; the fathers of the council are led back to their homes in triumph; perfumes are burnt on their road; fires and numerous lighted torches attest the universal joy, and confer upon this memorable night the brightness of day. What shall I add more? The anathema pronounced against Nestorius was immediately repeated by all the Christian Churches, as it has been throughout all ages; splendid temples were erected, and dedicated under the invocation of the Divine Mother; the already numerous festivals which were celebrated in her honor again increased, and devotion towards her became the distinguishing sign by which the truly faithful are recognised.

Such, my brethren, are the examples of holy and venerable antiquity. I ask, now, if the worship which we render to Mary is a puerile and novel devotion? Why, cannot I quote what the most ancient Fathers have declared, to make you comprehend better the excellence of those pious and learned men that paganism admired, before whom heresies grew pale, and whom the whole Catholic Church venerates:—Irenæus, Basil, Ephraim, Epiphanius, Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrosius? But, by here repeating those words pronounced in the same Council of Ephesus, with the unanimous approbation of all the fathers, by the illustrious Patriarch of Alexandria, St. Cyril, who was the soul of that great assembly, will it not be, to a certain extent, to re-echo the voice of the entire priesthood and the ancient episcopacy? Addressing himself, then, to Mary, in the name and in the presence of so many bishops, St. Cyril exclaimed:

"We salute you, O Virgin Mother—you, the living and immortal temple of Divinity, the treasure and light of the world, the honor of virginity, the pillar of the true faith, the firm supporter of all the churches: you, who brought forth a God, and enclosed in your chaste bosom him whom no space can contain; you, by whom the Holy Trinity is known and adored, the Divine Cross honored throughout the earth, in whom the blessed angels rejoice, and demons, driven from heaven, fly before Christianity; you, by whom fallen man is reinstated in his rights to the celestial inheritance, by whom idolatry is destroyed and mankind converted; you, by whom the Prophets have spoken, Evangelists have written, and Apostles have announced salvation to all nations. What more shall I add?—you, by whom kings reign, through whom the dead arise, in whom the only Son of God has shone, like a benign star, in the sight of nations buried in the shadow of death. But," continues he, as it were transported beyond himself, "who can praise her worthily, who is above all praise? Oh, fruitful Virginity, incomprehensible wonder, the thought of which inspires me with admiration!" Let others oppose this Divine mystery by impious subtleties; for our part, let it suffice us to respect and believe; let all our knowledge and all our happiness consist in rendering our profound adorations to the Triune God; and in celebrating continually the greatness of the august Mary, perpetually a virgin, and of her immaculate Son, to whom all glory belongs throughout all eternity. Brethren, have you rightly understood? Would you have thought that the dignity, right, and power of Mary could be so loftily elevated? And these are not only the words of one of the most learned and most celebrated of the ancient Fathers; but, moreover, these are the words consecrated by the solemn approbation of one of the first general councils, inscribed in its solemn acts, in which we still read them, and which are carefully preserved in the archives of the Catholic Church. Let us speak no more, after this, of John Damascene, Ildefonsus, Anselm, and Bernard, who, in volumes wholly written in the praise of that glorious Virgin, could not have excelled what this single address imbodied; let us blush, we impotent, weak orators, not for the immoderation, but for

the timidity of our eulogisms, which, altogether, are so far from equalling those few sentences of the sublime Cyril.

But why place so much stress upon the evidence and monuments of those remote ages? Is the church of the present day less influenced by the Holy Spirit, less infallible in her doctrine and worship, than she was in the early ages? Or, rather, is she not ever one and the same church, existing interminably, and equally incapable of error throughout all ages?

Now, who can conceal her zeal for the glory of Mary? Enumerate, if you can, the prayers and supplications which the church addresses to her in every part of her liturgy; the festivals which she has appointed in the honor of Mary; the temples and altars which she has consecrated under her patronage throughout all parts of the world, the favors and graces which she lavishes upon those who devote themselves especially to honor the Blessed Virgin.

See, then, my brethren, what imposing and sacred authorities are united, to recommend to your veneration the worship of the Mother of God. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; the Prophets and Apostles of the church, in early and modern times; the councils and holy Fathers, the sovereign pontiffs and all the Catholic episcopacy, have only one sentiment and form, a united concert in favor of so salutary and so holy a devotion. Those, then, who despise it; those who, under frivolous pretences, turn the faithful away from it; those who affect to dread, like Nestorius, that the mass of real worshippers, of whom Jesus Christ is the head, should fall into gross idolatry by honoring his mother—*Ne faciat Virginem deam*—can no longer call themselves the children of the church, which they calumniate; nor invoke the Holy Scriptures, which they repudiate; nor repose themselves upon tradition and antiquity, which condemn them; nor can they escape, under whatever veil they conceal themselves, from the just reproach of rashness and irreligion.

Thus the great Bishop of Meaux, whom we cannot suspect of being a weak and superstitious man, concluded a lecture upon the same subject which I am treating, with these remarkable words. Listen to them, my brethren, and remember that it is not I, but the great luminary of the Church of France, who

speaks: "Consequently," said he, "since the devotion towards the Blessed Virgin is based upon so solid a foundation, accursed be he who denies it, and deprives Christians of so powerful a support: accursed be he who undervalues it; for he destroys the piety of the soul."

What a sentence, my brethren, and how terrible it is! We, then, who do not wish to draw down this curse upon our heads, let us redouble our veneration and zeal for a devotion which the most imposing authorities in the sight of faith oblige us to respect, as you have just seen; let the most serious, the most urgent motives in the sight of reason itself, make it a duty for us to practise; as I am about to set forth in the second part of this discourse.

I do not pretend, my dear brethren, that the weak reason of man can, by itself and without the aid of faith, elevate itself to the knowledge of mysteries, upon which the greatness and the rights of Mary are established; but these mysteries being known, and the principles of faith established, I say that the enlightened reason of the Christian will have no difficulty in understanding the force and solidity of the motives which impel us to honor that incomparable Virgin. Devote yourselves, therefore, to a subject worthy of all your attention.

The first of these motives is a motive of justice, derived from the remarkable dignity and unequalled elevation of Mary. I know that, properly speaking, there is but one great God, and that to him alone essentially belong honor and glory: *Soli Deo honor et gloria.* I. Tim. i. 17. But it pleases that great God to glorify his creatures, made after his image; and he desires that they should be revered in the same ratio as he elevates them; he draws them irresistibly to himself, and communicates to them some portion of his greatness, holiness, and power. Hence the command to render to every one the honor which is due to him: *Cui honorem, honorem.* Hence, the sacred duty of honor and respect to kings, on account of the supereminence of their dignity: *Regi quasi præcellenti;* I. Peter ii. 13: and because they are the deputies of God upon earth, the representatives of his majesty among men, and the depositaries of his sovereign authority: *Dei enim minister est.* Rom. xiii. 4. Hence, again, the homage which we pay to the saints, as the

friends of God: *Nimis honorificati sunt amici tui, Deus;* Psalm cxxxviii. 17;—and to the angels as the ministers of his will, and to his ambassadors with us: *Mittam angelum meum....observa eum.* Exod. xxiii. 20, 21. Now, if such are the rights which give to simple creatures the title of friends—envoys, representatives of God, what will be the rights of a privileged creature amidst all others, who by a singular and ineffable favor, has been selected to be the mother of that same God; to conceive in her womb, and produce, from her pure blood, a God-made man; to carry the divine child in her arms; to nourish him with her milk; to guide and support his first footsteps; to command him by virtue of her maternal authority; to see him obey, like a submissive and respectful Son! *Et erat subditus.*

I confess, my brethren, that these are wonders which very far exceed our comprehension; and that these marvellous relations between a child God, who obeys a mortal mother who commands, are sufficient to astonish all the comprehension of the human mind. But it is not less certain that these relations are a necessary consequence of the incarnation of the Word, that fundamental mystery of Christianity; and by taking upon himself our nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, he, who by his divinity is infinitely above all law and all created nature, imposed upon himself a natural obligation of honoring, as man and as a son, her who was thought worthy to give him birth: *Honora matrem tuam;* an obligation which he has not failed to fulfil in all its extent; he, who had come to fulfil all righteousness, and to furnish the example of the most perfect observance of all the law: *Non veni solvere legem sed adimplere.* Matt. v. 17. The more then the elevation which proceeds from thence for Mary is surprising and incomprehensible to our reason, the more that reason shows us that it is just, that we should honor her to whom the God man, our model and master, has made it a duty to render honor and obedience: *Erat subditus.* Remark, that these sacred relations being eternal and indissoluble, since it will be everlastingly true that the Son of God is the son of Mary, the glory with which he crowns her in that capacity, is not transient but eternal; and he wills that she should be eternally glorified in heaven by his angels and saints. How then could the church militant, which finds all her consolation in

repeating, during her exile, the canticles of the immortal Sion, refuse on this point alone, and when there is question of the mother of her spouse, to unite her voice with that of her sister, the church triumphant, and take part in the concerts of the happy country?

Oh, no, my brethren, the union is perfect; heaven and earth respond to it, and sing with emulation the praises of her who is united by such close ties to the Saviour whom they adore: *Filiæ.... beatissimam prædicaverunt....et reginæ....laudaverunt eam.* Who are those who desire to disturb so beautiful a harmony, by telling us that God is offended with these homages paid to a pure creature,—that he beholds them with an indignant and jealous eye?

Oh, error! Oh, incomprehensible blindness! What! O Lord! You, who command us in your holy word to honor the memory of the just, and to praise them in the assembly of the faithful: *Laudem eorum nuntiet ecclesia*, (Eccles. xliv. 15:) You, who promise to bless those who bless your servants, and threaten with your maledictions those who curse them: *Benedicam benedicentibus tibi, et maledicam et maledicentibus;* (Gen. xii. 3:) You, who clothe your saints with the splendor of glory and majesty, which renders them venerable to kings and nations: *Glorificavit illum in conspectu regum*, (Eccles. xlv. 3;) would you be offended with the manifestation of respect which we render to your divine mother? Should we not be permitted to bless, with the woman in the gospel, the womb which bore you and the breasts which nurtured you? To salute humbly, with the angel, that Blessed Virgin, full of grace, who is now beatified with heavenly glory! to call her, with Elizabeth, "Holy and happy among all the daughters of Adam!" To mix, in our deep adorations to you, the testimony of our religious veneration for her, who gave you to the earth, and without whom we should not have known you! Ah! Lord, to whom, after all, belongs, and in whom terminates, the homage we pay her, if not to you? What do we revere in the Blessed Virgin? Is it not the lively image of your divine perfections, which you have traced in her? What do we praise, is it not the excellency of your gifts and graces? Is it not the intimate relationship and the ineffable bonds which inseparably attach her to you, that causes us to fall prostrate at her feet? Far from thinking that you would be jealous of such honors, we

should think that you would be offended by our refusal of them. If mortal beings justly require respect for their relations and for the authors of their lives, why should you not exact it, you, the immortal King of Ages, for her who has given you life? And if, as you yourself teach us, it were better to touch the apple of your eye—*Qui enim tetigerit vos, tangit pupillam oculi mei*, (Zach. ii. 8,) than to fail in respect to the least of your elect; how should we not wound your most tender heart by treating your mother with indifference and contempt?

This is sufficient, my dear brethren, upon the first motive which should oblige us to honor Mary, and which I have denominated a motive of justice; the second is a motive of love.

Not to speak of the numerous other claims she has to our love —there are two which ought particularly to affect our hearts: she is our great benefactress! she is our true mother!

To speak first, then, of her benefits; and it is sufficient to say that they are immense?—must we not confess that they are, in a certain sense, infinite? O! you who have faith, listen to me; to whom are we indebted for all good, if it be not to our Divine Redeemer, who, seeing the unhappy posterity of Adam fallen away from all their privileges, enveloped in crime and in the disgrace of a guilty father, doomed without resource to eternal evils, came and offered himself for us to the justice of an angry God, and who, by taking upon himself our punishment, has restored us to life, hope, and salvation? Now, this Redeemer, to whom we owe every thing, is it not Mary, next to God, who has given him to us? How, then, should it not be true, that with him she has given us all things? *Quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donavit?* (Rom. viii. 32.) In conceiving him in her womb, and bringing him into the world, she has conceived grace, brought forth mercy, and poured a torrent of divine blessings upon the earth. Yes, all proceeds from Mary, since all comes from Jesus. That precious blood which was shed upon the cross for the expiation of our sins, and which we now drink every day, as the draught of immortality in the cup of salvation—that blood of the new and eternal covenant had its source in the heart and veins of Mary. That adorable flesh, torn, sacrificed for us upon Calvary, and become, in the sacrament of the Eucharist, the living bread of our souls, the germ of the future resurrection

of our bodies, is a portion of the sacred flesh of Mary! The ineffable union of the divinity with our weak nature, by which God descended into man, and man was raised to God, and which was formed in the holy bosom of Mary, has become the sanctuary wherein the reconciliation of heaven and earth was effected.

Let us declare it boldly, and let our gratitude proclaim so astonishing a marvel: the blessing which we owe to Mary is for the great blessing of God himself, the mystery of the redemption of the human race, of whom she was, not the blind instrument, but the free and voluntary co-operatrix. We were purchased, we were saved, from the moment in which that glorious Virgin, giving the consent which God, the angels, the universe expected, pronounced these humble, but efficacious words: "Let it be done unto me according to thy word:" *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.* (Luke i. 38.) From that period we had a Liberator; hell was vanquished, and heaven opened to our hopes: a man-God existed, and all the designs of an infinite mercy were accomplished.

After this, I inquire, what have all other beings together done for our salvation, which can bear a comparison with what Mary has done? The prophets announced the Saviour, angels celebrated his birth; the holy harbinger exhibited him to the world; Apostles, Evangelists announced him to all nations; the ministers of the church, throughout all ages, declare his word to us, dispense to us his sacraments and his mysteries. But Mary brought forth from her substance this Saviour himself; she nourished him, brought him up with care and an anxiety which cannot be expressed, to be our victim; and, entering into the love of the Father for mankind, she did not spare her only Son; she consented to his death, because it was necessary for us; and speechless at the foot of the cross, her heart pierced with the sword of sorrow, she offered him in sacrifice for us: *Proprio filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum.* Rom. viii. 32. Such, my dear brethren, is the share which Mary had in the great work of our redemption.

All the holy Fathers have acknowledged this, which caused St. Irenæus to say, that "Eve had destroyed the human race, and Mary had redeemed it:" *Ut virginis Evæ virgo Maria fieret*

advocata, et quemadmodum astrictum est morti genus humanum per mulierem, salvaretur per virginem: St. Augustine also declares that "a woman brought death upon us, and that a woman restored us to life:" *Per feminam mors, per feminam vita; per Evam interitus, per Mariam salus:* Tertullian asserts, likewise, that "we have been extricated from the abyss by the same sex which cast us into it:" *Ut quod per ejusmodi sexum abierat in perditionem, per eundem sexum redigeretur in salutem.* Ah! what else does the Holy Spirit itself say, when it announces, in the beginning of the world, that a woman shall crush the head of the serpent—which means, shall destroy all the power of hell: *Ipsa conteret caput tuum?*

These are the divine benefits we derive from that august Virgin; and shall we acknowledge them but by a base ingratitude? and ought it not to be a part of our religion to manifest our gratitude and love towards her, to whom we are indebted, according to St. Cyril, for religion, the knowledge of the true God, and all the privileges of our divine adoption in Jesus Christ? These last words remind me that Mary is not only our great benefactress, but that she is likewise our mother. Yes, my brethren, the same adoption which makes us the children of God, makes us at the same time the children of Mary. Permit me to explain, in a few words, that deep and affecting mystery; to point out to you the basis of a more solid grandeur, of a loftier elevation, than that which flows from a long train of ancestors, and from the most illustrious birth.

By a marvellous effect of the incarnation of the Word in the bosom of a virgin, he who was through all eternity the only Son of the Father, *Unigenitus filius, qui est in sinu patris,* has become the first-born of an innumerable multitude of brethren: *Primogenitus in multis fratribus.* We are those happy brethren of an Incarnate God; he himself has given us that glorious and delightful name: *Vade ad fratres meos.* Now, Jesus Christ, being no less the Son of the blessed Mary by his humanity, than he is by his divinity the Son of the Most High, we should only be his brethren by halves, if we were not united in this double, Divine and human descent; if we had not in the capacity of Christians, one same Father and mother with him. Wherefore, he did not leave us in any doubt in this respect; for, even before

ascending to heaven, he said to us, through the medium of the first disciples: "I am ascending to my Father, and to your Father," *Ascendo ad patrem meum et patrem vestrum;* St. John xx. 17;—in the same manner, before dying, he said to us, in the person of his well-beloved disciple: "Behold your mother;" at the same time pointing to his own, *Ecce mater tua.* St. John xix. 27. Oh, the consoling word! And shall we render it vain?—shall we despise the mother which our expiring Saviour gives us? That divine mother whom heaven boasts of having for a queen! that mother so tender, who is not satisfied with adopting us as her children, but who, in the moment of her most cruel anguish upon Mount Calvary, brought us forth, in an ineffable manner, by the bowels of her charity, in the blood and death of her first-born, sacrificed for us as a Holocaust. Oh! let us beware, my dear brethren, that if we refuse to have the blessed Mary for our mother, we shall be no longer either the brethren of Jesus Christ, nor, consequently, the children of God, nor the heirs of his kingdom, destined for eternal life—since the blessed Mary, or the new Eve, is the only true mother of all those who live everlastingly: *Mater cunctorum viventium.* Gen. iii. 20. But, on the other hand, what an inconsistency, what an insult, if, when acknowledging her as our mother, we refuse her the respect and love due to her; if we affect an odious indifference towards her, and remain strangers to the reverence which the filial piety of Christians offers to her. Oh, happy, a thousandfold, are those who know how to love that mother of mercy! What a consolation do they not experience in invoking and blessing her! What transporting beauties do they not discover in the contemplation of her virtues! And, above all, what precious fruits do they not derive from her intercession, the channel of all graces, and the inexhaustible source of all blessings! So that, if justice, gratitude, and love were not motives all-powerful, our self-interest alone might be sufficient to incite us to honor her: the last consideration, and with which I conclude.

Weak beings, and at the same time immortal, we have a twofold interest—that of time, which terminates with life; and that of eternity, which endures as long as God exists. Now, to begin with the latter consideration, as being the most important. It

is the constant doctrine of the saints, that we cannot be saved without the aid of the blessed Mary. Listen to the words of Saint Bernard: "God," says he, "having enclosed in the womb of the Blessed Virgin the entire price of our redemption, and the fulness of all good, we can have neither hope, grace, nor salvation but through her: *Si quid spei in nobis est, si quid gratiæ, si quid salutis, ab eâ noverimus redundare.*" Saint Anselm does not hesitate to assert that whoever is abandoned by Mary will inevitably perish: *Necesse est ut pereat.* Some of the fathers represent her to us as the only dispenser of the treasures of Jesus Christ; others, as our indispensable mediatrix with our Divine Saviour. But what more can we add to the beautiful expression of Saint Epiphanius, who called her the common propitiatrix of the universe: *Commune mundi propitiatorium.*

The great bishop of Meaux repeated only the language of tradition when he pronounced this remarkable sentence: "By virtue of this immutable decree of divine wisdom, the blessed Mary will eternally contribute to all the operations of grace for the salvation of man." This, then, is the doctrine, not of a few enthusiastic panegyrists, but of the greatest and most learned doctors, as well as of the most holy saints: that she is the perpetual co-operatrix of our salvation; and that grace effects nothing for us without her participation. Invoke her, then, all of you who wish not to perish, and who aspire to immortal life. Righteous and fervent souls, invoke Mary, so that she may sustain you in the narrow and rugged path of holiness; that, by ascending from one virtue to another, you may attain to the summit of that holy mountain where God crowns the elect. Lukewarm and wavering souls, ye who bear so faintly the yoke of the Saviour, apply to the blessed Mary, that she may hasten to remove your tepidity, before God shall wholly cast you out from his people; and that so your heart,—tired of a piety languid and without consolation, because faithless and without charity,—may not regret the delights of crime, and may return, according to the expression of the Holy Scriptures—"Like a dog to its vomit." And you, sinners, who, plunged into the abyss of the most terrible excesses, feel the horrors of your condition, but despair of escaping from it—you, who no longer believe in the possibility of breaking such heavy chains,

and of vanquishing such inveterate habits, fly to Mary; with her assistance, it will be possible to accomplish every thing; your errors will be dispersed; vice will lose those deceptive charms which have betrayed you; virtue will display her most gentle and attractive delights, and you will find in purer habits the peace and happiness which your passions could never procure. Even you, O impious! whose destruction appears inevitable, since you are at open war with Heaven, if any pity yet remains even for yourselves,—if sometimes the thought of the frightful position in which you are placed, and of the terrible problem which death must speedily solve, occasions an involuntary shudder, do not fail to take some steps against such an eternal misfortune; but turn your eyes towards the blessed Mary, and in your bitter tribulation do not hesitate to say to her, "O Virgin! of whom such wonders are recounted, if it be true that you have so great a power with God, and that he rejects none of your petitions,—if it be true that we are saved only in the faith of Christians, and that unbelief is a deplorable error which must lead to an eternity of despair, obtain for me but one ray of this divine faith, so long extinguished in my mind; let it shine anew, and show me the road to escape from the abyss into which I have precipitated myself, and in which I am lost. I will acknowledge by that sign that you have favorably heard me; I will walk in that light, and, being returned from my errors, I shall never forget that I am indebted to you for the greatest of benefits!" O ye impious! try the experiment, and however weak your prayer may be, I venture to guarantee, if it be dictated by sincerity, that it will not be inefficacious, and there can be but little doubt that you will be found among the number of those happy incredulous who, moved by a gracious victory, are rescued by a miracle from the chaos of error, and pass from the shades of death into the regions of light and life.

It is thus that the Blessed Virgin aids us in all the necessities of our souls. The Queen of Heaven deigns to interest herself in our terrestrial and perishable affairs! Ah! she is our mother, and nothing which affects her children can be uninteresting to her. Her solicitude, in accordance with that of our Heavenly Father, extends to all our works; to assist us in all

our dangers—in order to remove them; in all our woes—that she may ameliorate them; in our worldly affairs, and in all our legitimate undertakings—to favor their success, as far as our well-being is concerned. Shall I enter into a long detail of facts to prove what I assert? Read, my brethren, read the history of past times and the chronicles of the church, and behold every where scourges turned away; tempests appeased; the sick cured; the dead brought to life; hostile armies overcome; empires and cities saved through the protection of Mary! Take a survey of this great capital and the provinces of France; behold the number of temples and sanctuaries consecrated under her name in the cities and boroughs, upon its sea-shores, and upon the waters which confine them,—in the depths of valleys, on the tops of mountains; ask for what cause they have been erected, and you will learn that each of them is a signal, is a monument of some especial favor obtained through the intercession of Mary; of some remarkable prodigy wrought through her power. Recount to me those festivals, so numerous, appointed to her honor, which occupy us throughout the year, and in which she is invoked, under so many various denominations, as the dispenser of victory, the arbitress of peace, the queen of mercy, the certain resource in our wants; and I will prove to you that they are so many solemn evidences of the gratitude of the Catholic world for Christianity, having been so frequently and miraculously delivered, either from the inundation of barbarians, the oppression of Mussulmans, schisms, factions, and intestine warfare, which have desolated it, or from other great evils which at various times have threatened its destruction.

May we all, O Blessed Virgin! place our confidence in your powerful protection, and so arrive at the port of eternal salvation! Amen.

Father Ventura's First Conference

On the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DELIVERED IN THE BASILIC OF ST. PETER AT ROME.

"Jesus goes to the garden of Olives." *"Ubi est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum."*—MATT. vi. 21.

WHAT is, then, my brethren, in the order of salvation, that treasure of which the gospel speaks, so precious that, should it succeed in fixing our ideas, it captivates at the same moment all our affections? *Ubi est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum.* It is, according to St. Paul, the mystery of the sufferings and of the ignominies of Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Redeemer of mankind. Sublime and profound mystery, in which God has comprised all the riches of his wisdom, of his power, of his goodness; and which, when revealed to Moses, many centuries ere it was fulfilled, inspired the holy legislator, as the Apostle assures us, with the desire of partaking in it, and the courage of sacrificing to it all the treasures of Egypt.

Fide Moyses....majores divitias æstimans thesauro Egyptiorum, improperium Christo. In reality, this mystery, which scandalizes the obstinate Jews, and revolts the pride of the Gentiles, is nevertheless that which has renewed the face of the earth, satisfied the justice of God, redeemed man unto salvation, opened heaven, sanctified the world, and disarmed hell. It is this mystery which has engendered a more holy religion, a more spiritual worship, and a purer virtue, because it is more interior: from it spring more efficacious sacraments, more abundant graces, more sublime ceremonies, more perfect laws; it is that which has substituted to the ancient alliance, founded upon a servile fear, the tender adoption of men as children of God;

this mystery is the striking manifestation of all the truths, and the censure of all errors; all vices find their condemnation therein, all virtues their principle, all merits their recompense; it is, in short, the foundation of faith, the support of hope, and the most powerful motive to the love of God. Deign here to accept, O most precious passion of my Saviour, the tribute of my praises and of my gratitude! I adore thee, and bless thee, because through thee proceeds the instruction of the ignorant, the science of doctors, the efficacy of preaching, the courage of martyrs. Thou restorest those who are overcome with fatigue, thou givest strength to the weak, thou dost purify those who are defiled, thou dost enrich the poor; thou grantest liberty to captives, health to the sick, and life to the dead; thou art a powerful defence to those assailed by temptation; thou givest consolation to the afflicted, and hope to those who no longer hoped. It is in thee that sinners obtain pardon—the cowardly, encouragement, and the indifferent, fervor. Through thee the saints attain perfection, the just obtain perseverance, and the elect their crown; and for that reason, to begin by St. Paul, thou hast ever been, and still art, the delight and the glory of truly Christian souls, of hearts devoted to Jesus Christ. Therefore the passion of our Lord ought to be the first study—the incessant study—of every Christian. "And is it not just," says Buonaventure, "that we should not leave off meditating on the sufferings which our Saviour made no difficulty in undergoing for us?" *Non debet nos tædere cogitare, quod ipsum Dominum non tæduit tolerare.* (Med. Vit. Christ. c. 74.) "So much the more, that among the works of God," says St. Leo, "there is not one which consoles the faithful heart, which makes it the object of its meditations, as much as does the passion of our Saviour." *Quid autem, inter opera Dei, contemplationem mentis nostræ oblectat sicut passio Salvatoris?* (Serm. ii. de Pass.) "But if we ought to meditate at all times upon the ignominies and sufferings of Jesus Christ, much more," observes the same St. Leo, "it is requisite we should devote ourselves to this meditation at the time we are now entering upon; on which occasion the apostles, inspired by the Holy Ghost, instituted in the church a solemn fast." (*Devotionem nostram præsentes vel maxime dies exigunt in quibus a sanctis apostolis, per doctrinam Spiritus Sancti, majora sunt*

ordinata jejunia.) So that we might be able to unite ourselves in spirit to the cross of Jesus Christ, while we crucify our flesh by penance, and occupy ourselves in sympathizing in his anguish, at the period which brings to our minds all that he has suffered for us: *Ut, per commune consortium crucis Christi, etiam nos aliquid, in eo quod propter nos gessit, ageremus.* (Serm. ix. de Quadrag.) For this reason, my brethren, entrusted with the honorable mission of announcing to you from this pulpit the divine word of God during this season of Lent, I shall not treat of any other subject than that which formed the chief subject of the preaching of St. Paul, namely, the passion and the death of Jesus crucified; and I shall merely successively develop the history of the passion of our Saviour, and present it to you with its admirable simplicity, and such as it proceeds from the assemblage of the recitals of the four evangelists.

We shall consider, in the beginning of this discourse, Jesus repairing to the Garden of Olives; and we shall see what signifies the canticle which our Saviour says, *et hymno dicto;* his leaving Jerusalem, *egressus est Jesus;* and the torrent of Cedron which he traverses, *trans torrentem Cedron;* and the Mount of Olives, towards which he directs his steps, *in Montem Olivarum;* and finally the spot called Gethsemane, and the garden where he retires with his disciples: *In villam, quæ dicitur Gethsemani ubi erat hortus: in quam introivit ipse et discipuli ejus.* We shall thus discover a rich treasure of mysteries, of instructions and examples, concealed under the most simple and most natural words. Happy shall we be if, in applying our minds to it, we also fix our hearts upon it! *Ubi est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum.* Happy shall we be if we familiarize ourselves during this life with the passion of our Lord; as, according to St. Ambrose, it is the means of obtaining in the next life the participation in his paradise: *Qui consortio passionis utitur, consortio paradisi donatur.* (Serm. iii.) Much more even, in making use of this word of the apostle, that, if we compassionate the anguish of our Saviour, and suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. St. Leo does not hesitate to assert, that the possession of eternal bliss which is promised to us, is affirmed in an ineffable manner to the Christian who unites himself to the passion of Jesus Christ: *Apostolus ait: si compatimur et conglori-*

ficabimur. Certa atque secura est expectatio promissæ beatitudinis, ubi est participatio Dominicæ Passionis. (Loc. cit.) But what can I say myself upon so great a mystery, inaccessible to angels, impenetrable to devils, and totally incomprehensible to human reason! Ah! shall I say with St. Leo, this subject, which, in itself is above all expressions, and all ideas, will abundantly supply us with expressions and ideas? In striking us with astonishment, it will make us eloquent; and we shall ever find an inexhaustible matter in a subject of which, whatever may be said, never can there be sufficient said: *Ipsa materia, ex eo quod est ineffabilis, fandi tribuit facultatem: nec potest deficere quod dicatur, dum nunquam potest satis esse quod dicitur.* (Serm. ii. de Pass.)

But from what you teach us, O my God, if we understand only by faith, we shall only profit by prayer: it is from you that we implore the necessary grace to discover the splendor of your divinity in the midst of the most profound humiliations of your holy humanity: *In lumine tuo videbimus lumen.* (Ps. xxxv.) It is yourself who has accomplished this sublime mystery, of whom we humbly beg understanding and love, so as to be able to apply to ourselves the fruits of it; and you, holy Mary, mother of God, and our tender mother, obtain for us these precious graces, so that a work, whose accomplishment cost so many sorrows to your heart, may not prove sterile to our souls. Do thou, also, glorious prince of the apostles, St. Peter, intercede for me, I beseech thee, that close to the fundamental stone of thy faith, which is also mine, in this holy temple, receptacle of thy sacred bones, I may relate with benefit the supreme glories, namely, the passion of our Divine Master, of whom thou hast spoken thyself with such an ardent love: *Christi passiones, et posteriores glorias.* (1 Pet. i.) May the mysteries which I undertake to explain make a deep impression on our minds and in our hearts,—so that they may be evident in our whole life,—so that they may be our strength at the hour of death, and that they may become the pledge of our everlasting happiness. Beseech thy Divine Master to bless the course of these instructions, which I open under thy patronage, for the glory of Jesus Christ, the sanctification of the faithful, and the edification of the church: In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

When the last supper was concluded, that great and solemn supper in which, by the ineffable institution of the holy eucharist, infinite wisdom, the God of love, had for ever established himself among us, at the same moment when men were contriving a plot to take away his life, our Saviour, according to the evangelists, ere he left the cenacle, recited a canticle with his disciples: *et hymno dicto.* What was the canticle which our Saviour recited? Paul de Burgos, from the authority of the liturgical books of the synagogue, says, in regard to this hymn or canticle which our Saviour thus recited, that it was the Seven Psalms, of which the initials in Hebrew formed together the words Alleluia; psalms which the Hebrews were accustomed to sing at the end of each supper, and especially at the conclusion of that one where they eat the Paschal Lamb: therefore in reciting this hymn after the last supper, in which the true Lamb of God was immolated under a mystical form, then offered and given as nourishment to the disciples in the eucharistic communion, our Saviour, affirms St. John Chrysostome, wishes to teach us, by his example, that if, after having taken corporal nourishment, we ought to render humble and fervent thanksgiving to the God of goodness, who deigns to support our bodily strength by the means of the sustenance with which his providence supplies us, we are still more compelled to it, after having partaken of his spiritual banquet, wherein God gives to our souls the precious body and blood of his divine Son. From thence proceeds the custom, with the early Christians, to thank God in common after each repast, which is still preserved in religious communities; from thence comes, that the church concludes the holy sacrifice of the mass by the collect called post-communion, and followed by the recital of Texte and of None. Indeed, these prayers and psalms admirably correspond to the hymn which the apostles sang, in union with Jesus Christ, after having assisted at the first mass celebrated in the cenacle, and received the eucharistic communion.

The venerable Bede gives another admirable interpretation of the hymn which Jesus Christ recited on this occasion. "Our Lord," he says, "in commencing his passion by a holy canticle, wished to show us with what transports of his tender heart, with what affectionate impatience, with what joy and ardour he was

going to suffer and die, so as to teach us that we should be ready, we also, to embrace sufferings, to mortify our passions, and to sacrifice ourselves for Jesus Christ, with an earnest heart, with a true and holy joy."

After having sung that hymn, our Saviour leaves Jerusalem with his apostles. (*Et hymno dicto, egressus est Jesus cum discipulis suis.*) I question for what motive the evangelists have related this circumstance, which, in an historical point of view, would seem superfluous. Without this observation, indeed, would it not be easy to understand that, in order to repair to the Mount of Olives, situated out of Jerusalem, it was necessary to go out of this town? But no, this circumstance is not superfluous, which recalls and represents a great mystery. Jesus Christ, with his apostles, is the true Church. This going out of Jesus Christ and his apostles from the town of Jerusalem, to commence his passion, sensibly reminds us of the true Church, the true religion, which, by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, abandons from that moment the Jews to their wilful blindness, and goes to enlighten the Gentiles, who leave Jerusalem to transport its seat to Rome. Jesus Christ, who was all to the Jews, is from this moment every thing to us. O unhappy Jerusalem! O happy Rome! A mystery of justice severe to the Jews, but merciful to us! Not only does our Saviour, on his leaving Jerusalem, offer us the image of a great mystery: he also presents us with an important precept.

In order to understand it fully, we must remember that at that time the princes of the priests were assembled in council to concert the means of apprehending Jesus; that Judas was engaged in congregating together the soldiers and the assassins for the execution of this project; that the passions of men were agitated, in order to condemn to death the Saviour of the world. Jerusalem, therefore, was on this occasion the true figure of the world: here all passions, and particularly the great and false philosophers, full of the spirit and maxims of the world, were in a continual agitation, endeavoring unremittingly to fabricate intrigues, and contrive a plot against Jesus Christ, against his worship, his doctrines, his religion, against the liberty of his church, and against the virtue of his faithful disciples—therefore Jesus Christ, who leaves Jerusalem accompanied by his

apostles, it is he who repudiates, who rejects the world. It is Jesus Christ who teaches us, that, to be of the number of his disciples, to form part of his society, of his family, of his true church, according to the spirit, it is not sufficient to hear him, to profess his doctrine, to participate occasionally in his holy mysteries, to recite in his honor a few worthless praises, or address to him a few feeble prayers; but that we must also separate ourselves from the world, if not in reality, at least by the detachment of our hearts; that we must renounce the corruption of the world, the maxims of the world, the opinion of the world, its habits, its fashions, those laws of the world which are opposed to the gospel. The spirit of the world has been openly excommunicated by Jesus Christ: he excluded it from his religion, from his mercy, and from his love. Wo be to us, if we live according to this spirit! We shall be condemned in our turn, on account of the world; and we shall perish with the world. The evangelists relate again, that, after he left Jerusalem, Jesus crossed the torrent of Cedron. Even this proceeding contains a mysterious sense. This torrent is that which David spoke of in a prophetic spirit:—*De torrente in via bibet: propterea exaltabit caput.* It signifies there, that it is the torrent of sufferings and ignominies which the Redeemer was to undergo to excess during his passage on earth, but which afterwards was to change into a flood of delights, into a subject of triumph and of glory. This torrent is called Cedron, a Hebrew word, says St. Jerome, which signifies blackish, obscure. Therefore, Jesus Christ descending in the torrent of obscurity and of darkness, is Jesus penetrating, in the darkness of night, into the profound abyss of horrors, of black ideas, of cruel hatred, of odious falsehoods, of atrocious calumnies, of injustice, of treasons, of baseness, of hypocrisy, in order finally to become the victim of his enemies; it is Jesus Christ advancing in the midst of the dreadful obscurity of troubles, of infinite torments, of insults, and of outrages, multiplied to excess, which, to speak of with the prophets, similar to a furious torrent loaded with iniquities, were about to force a passage over his sacred body, and to overflow his soul; to surround it on all sides, and to cast it into an ocean of afflictions, insults, and sufferings. *Quoniam intraverunt aquæ usque ad*

animam meam. (Ps. lxviii.) *Magna est velut mare contritio tua.* (Thess. ii.)

Besides, the Cedron flows at the eastern extremity of a valley which separates Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. In this valley was a thickly-wooded forest, which the superstition of the degenerated Jews, according to St. Jerome, had consecrated to Moloch. This nation had attained to such an excess of stupid impiety and barbarous folly, that fathers went there in crowds to sacrifice their little children to an infamous idol, and caused them to be burnt alive in his honor—and, in order not to be moved by the cries of these innocent victims, they were careful, during this human sacrifice, to smother the voices of the innocent victims, by the noise of drums and other instruments: finally they threw away their ashes into the waters of the torrent, which, for this reason, remarks Cornelius Lapidis, was called *Cedron*, signifying *black and obscure*, on account of the remains of the corpses which were thrown in, blackened by the fire: *Cedron, niger, obscurus, a cadaverum combustorum fuligine.* (Matt. 26.)

This place was, therefore, the most injurious and most corrupt in the whole world; it was, as it were, the seat and the metropolis of the empire of Lucifer on earth, where this apostate angel received from the very people of God, and in sight of the temple of the Lord, divine honors and an abominable worship, where atrocity was added to sacrilege.

Therefore, all these circumstances explain to us, in an admirable manner, the reason for which our Lord wished to commence his passion near this torrent, and in this same valley; why he chose, by preference to any other, so infamous a place solemnly to devote himself to death. It is, says the interpreter whom we have just quoted, that our Saviour wished to attack the devil in the very centre of his sacrilegious empire; therefore, Jesus Christ, crossing the Cedron and repairing to the opposite shore, is the Redeemer who goes forward to face Lucifer, in order to humiliate, confound, and disarm him, and to overthrow his power by his agony and sufferings; like a generous and magnanimous warrior, who descends the first into the arena, faces his enemy, confident of conquering and triumphing over him. *Magnanimitatis*

hoc debet exemplum, ut arenam, cum diabolo pugnaturus, primus capessat, quasi certus de victoria et triumpho. (Loc. cit.)

Neither is it without a design that the gospel takes care to inform us that Jesus Christ repairs to the Mount of Olives, *in Montem Olivarum.* In this circumstance is found represented the salutary benefits that we were one day to reap by the passion.

The olive is the symbol of peace, and Jesus Christ, directing his steps towards the Mount of Olives, is, says Origen, the symbolical figure of Jesus, who goes, at the price of his blood, to terminate the ancient war which existed between heaven and earth, and to stipulate a treaty of solemn peace between God and man. The olive, from which oil flows, is the symbol of mercy; and Jesus Christ, going towards the Mount of Olives,—continues the same father,—is he who ascends on the mount of mercy, who exalts his ineffable love to the highest point, to the greatest power, to the most incomprehensible excess, by devoting himself to death for us. Jesus Christ is the true olive-tree, which raises itself, in a stately and majestic manner, to rejoice the church. *Ego quasi oliva speciosa in campis.* (Eccli. 24.) Therefore, Jesus, advancing towards the Mount of Olives, is, according to St. Paul, the true olive-tree, the fertile olive-tree, who, by the opening of his veins, and by the effusion of his blood, grafts us upon his own stem, and unites and incorporates with himself the wild and barren olive-trees, which are our souls, in order to make them fructify by his own virtue, by the heavenly sap of his grace and of his love.

The Mount of Olives, to which Jesus retires in order to escape public notice, there to suffer the first torments, the first insults, the first agony, and, I will venture to say, the first interior death of the soul, is this same Mount from which he, the conqueror of death, will soon transport himself to heaven, loaded with trophies.

"From this first voyage," exclaims St. Ambrose, "our Saviour teaches us what road we should follow, to be led back to heaven, from whence we had been exiled:" *vide quibus itineribus ad Paradisum reducamur.* (Lib. 4, in Luc.) Signifying that we must receive and confess the doctrine of Jesus Christ, strengthen ourselves with holy communion, fly far from the

corruption of Jerusalem, or, in other words, renounce all society, all contact with the world,—to cross over the black torrent of tribulations, of sacrifices, of humiliations, and of all troubles inseparable from a truly Christian life, to accompany Jesus Christ into the place of recollection, of solitude, and of prayer: that we should, in one word, offer ourselves up to God at the foot of the Mountain of Olives, and participate in his agony, out of love for him. This is the only means, this is the only course, nay, the only one, let us be well assured of it, in order to triumph over death and sin, and enter heaven with him. But why did our Saviour, who wished to pray on the declivity of the mount, and undergo the sufferings of a cruel agony, direct himself towards Gethsemane, and enter the garden which was on that spot? Why are all these incidents related by the Evangelists with such minute detail? *In villam quæ dicitur Gethsemani ubi erat hortus, in quem introivit.*

Will it be said that Jesus intended to avoid the researches of this impious troop of men, who, with Judas at their head, were soon going to apprehend him? On the contrary; because, as observes St. Luke, that was a place where they would naturally go to seek him, as every night, after the supper, Jesus was accustomed to retire to that spot for prayer: *secundum consuetudinem.* St. John is still more explicit, and he affirms that the traitor Judas had a perfect knowledge of the place, as our Saviour frequently repaired there with his disciples, and with the traitor himself, in order to pray: *Sciebat autem Judas locum, quia frequenter Jesus convenerat illuc cum discipulis suis.* (Joan. xviii.)

Therefore, in retiring into the garden, says St. Cyril, "our Saviour only wished to spare the infamous Judas the trouble of uselessly seeking him elsewhere:" *Hoc agebat ut a traditore citra negotium inveniretur.* (in Joan); and, by this means, he shows to his disciples, and he has proved to us, adds St. Chrysostome, "that it was by his entire free-will that he went to encounter death:" *Ostendens discipulis, quia volens ad mortem venit.* (Homil. 82, in Joan.) In reality, he has said, in clear and precise words, that no one could have taken away his life, if he himself had not consented to it, adding, that he only consented to give up his life so as to take it back again soon after: *Nemo*

tollit animam meam a me; sed ego eam pono, ut iterum sumam eam. (Joan. x.) Therefore, if he had waited for them to have seized him violently, unawares, and in public, he would, in some measure, have taken away from this striking and solemn truth, the spontaneity of his death; and every time that the Jews wished to take him, before the time that he had fixed, he escaped from their snares, or else he made himself invisible to them, because his hour was not yet come: *Quia nondum venerat hora ejus.* (Joan. vii.)

But now that the hour after which he had sighed is at last come, that hour so fortunate for us, that hour which he himself had decided in the eternal councils of his Father: *Pater, venit hora* (idem xvii.); Jesus goes forward, of his own will, to meet the violence which the Jews intend to inflict upon him, and retires to Gethsemane only on account of its being a spot well-known to Judas, and that he knows that his unfaithful disciple will more easily find him: *Sciebat autem Judas locum.* The Pharisees, moreover, feared that if Jesus were apprehended during the feast, a seditious tumult might arise among the people, who appeared to be so devoted to him: *Non in die festo, ne forte tumultus fieret in populo.* (Matt. xxvi.) "And this fear," observes St. Leo, "was not in the least the effect of zeal. It mattered little to the priests of that time whether the feast were profaned by excess or not, for they were indifferent to the worship and the love of God; but they feared that, on account of the confusion, the prisoner might escape from their hands." *Seditionem in præcipua solemnitate metuebant, non ut populus non peccaret; sed ne Christus evaderet.* (Serm. de Pass.) Therefore, in going to Gethsemane, in the precincts of Jerusalem, in that retired spot, secluded and peaceable, our Saviour forestalls all popular commotion; he takes care to remove the fears of his enemies; he destroys all obstacles which might impede his seizure; he goes forward to meet the plot which was then contrived against him. In this generous project of fulfilling, from that moment, in a secret and hidden manner, this sacrifice in the interior of his heart, even ere his body was sacrificed, the great Victim transports itself to the place where it is to be seized, and places itself under the assassin's knife which is to sacrifice it. The true Abel willingly repairs to the middle of the field, where another

Cain can easily apprehend him, in order to sacrifice him to his cruel hatred. *Ostendens quoniam volens ad mortem venit.*

Besides, the passion of Jesus Christ not being a punishment, but a sacrifice, and the greatest, the most sublime, the most sacred, the most meritorious of all sacrifices, it was not fitting that the holy Victim destined to such a holy sacrifice should be seized in a profane place. "In consequence," says Origen, "our Saviour ought not to have been apprehended by daylight, nor in a public place, nor in the midst of the last supper, but during the night, and in the Garden of Olives,—that is to say, during the time of prayer, and on the spot where the Son of God habitually went to commune with God his Father, and which, for this reason, was the true sanctuary, the real temple of God."

But St. Cyril discloses to us another mystery still more lovely and touching: "Remember," says the father, "that Adam prevaricated in a garden. Well, it is likewise in a garden that Jesus Christ this day enters, in order that his sufferings might commence in a similar place to that wherein sin had begun." *In paradiso, omnis tristitiæ nostræ principium fuit; in horto Christi quoque passio inchoata est.* (In Joan.) Jesus is therefore, on this occasion, our Mediator, who advances to disarm the celestial cherubim placed by divine justice at the gates of the true paradise, to break within his hands the glittering sword which prohibits the entrance to unfortunate mortals, and to obtain for the unhappy children of a prevaricating father, their return to the seat of happiness from whence they had been expelled. This spot, of which the terrestrial paradise was but an indistinct image, not only offers material and transient enjoyments, but heavenly and eternal joys:—in one word, concludes the celebrated Alcuin, Jesus entering into Gethsemane, is the new Adam who goes into a garden to expiate by his obedience the rebellion of which the first Adam made himself guilty in another garden. *Ubi erat hortus; ut peccatum quod in horto commissum fuerat, in horto deleret.* (In Catec.) O new paradise! how much thy aspect differs from that of the ancient Eden! there, the first Adam enjoyed repose, joy, delights, and the comforts of life; here, the second Adam experiences but struggles, vexations, terrors, affliction, and the distresses of agony. There, flowed streams of fresh and clear water; here, one perceives nothing but a river

streaming with the blood which flows from the veins of the Redeemer. There, an apostate angel was the instigator of rebellion and of sin; here, a faithful angel comes to sustain obedience and sacrifice. There, the majesty of God was insulted; here, it is satisfied. There, sin was committed; here, it is repaired. In the terrestrial paradise, humanity was precipitated towards its ruin; in the garden of Olives, it is brought back to the path of eternal salvation. In Eden, from the very flowers and fruits only sprang thorns of malediction and chastisement; at Gethsemane, on the very thorns of affliction and of suffering, rose up flowers and fruits of merit, of blessings, of graces, and of virtues. There, in fine, death sprang into existence under the shade of the tree of life; here, in the midst of an aspect of death, returns the hope of resurrection and of life. It is there, the mysterious garden of the church, where the Spouse of the Canticles earnestly entreated her beloved to descend. *Veniat dilectus meus in hortum suum.* (Cant. v.) O adorable Jesus! cherished Spouse of our souls, hasten then to this garden, so full of delights for us, sown with so much suffering for yourself. But is it necessary to redouble our prayers, in order to engage the sacred Spouse to take this step? A secret strength, the force of his charity, urges him, influences him, and persuades him, with an irresistible power. Behold how he advances, with a rapid step, a tranquil aspect, a dilated heart, a countenance beaming with joy. Christians, let us not lose this precious moment—let us hasten to follow Jesus in this garden, where his heart offers us all the treasures which can sanctify and gain ours. *Ubi est thesaurus tuus, ibi est et cor tuum.* I will explain myself: let us not lose, by self-indulgence in the foolish vanities of the world, that time which has only been given us to follow and imitate Jesus Christ; and let us pause, in concluding, on these words, so simple but so full of mysterious sense: Jesus entered into the garden with his disciples. *In quem introivit ipse et discipuli ejus.* The Divine Redeemer goes to the garden accompanied by his disciples; he himself directs their steps, instructs them, edifies them by his example, consoles and supports them by the sight of his sufferings; he sanctifies them, he unites them to his prayer in a peculiar manner, he efficaciously applies to them the fruit of his sacrifice, and of that precious blood which he sheds under their own eyes; and, finally, by the

virtue of his power, he makes himself their shield and defence against the rage of the Jews. Jesus Christ, in a word, makes his disciples the spectators and the companions of his sufferings on this same Mount of Olives, to which he will shortly summon them to be the companions and spectators of his glorious ascension into heaven. "Therefore," says St. Ambrose, "all this is the sensible image of the church; it is the figure of what Jesus Christ operates for the children of his church, and of what he asks for them; it is the history of the promises which he makes and of the recompenses which he reserves to true believers. Ah! if we should have the dreadful misfortune of being separated from the body of this church by schism or heresy, or that sin should render us strangers to her spirit, let us hasten to return to the bosom of this divine body. It is there alone that Jesus Christ dwells. Let us hasten to confound ourselves in a holy union with the apostles and disciples, with all the pious and faithful souls who follow our Saviour—let us hasten, while there is yet time, to unite ourselves to this happy society, which alone can insure us the possession of everlasting enjoyments.

In order to do so, let us listen with a humble spirit and a faithful heart, to the sublime and last commandment which Jesus Christ gives us, to receive his faith and to fulfil his holy law; let us often strengthen ourselves by holy communion, and address to the Almighty a hymn of gratitude and of love; let us fly from the pestilential atmosphere of Jerusalem, avoid profane assemblies, and the corrupt scenes of the society of the impious; let us partake of the black waters of the Cedron, and accept, with a pious resignation, tribulations and penance; let us cross this torrent, in suffering with a courageous constancy, for the love of Jesus Christ, the contempts of the world; let us often go to retire with him in the garden—namely, in the silence of meditation and of prayer. And let us not be afraid, if we are surrounded by the obscure night of humiliation; let not the bitterness of mortification discourage us; let not the persecutions of the modern synagogue of worldlings impede us. Let us consider without terror the difficult ascent which the mount of sanctity presents. We can do all and triumph over every thing, when we advance in the company of Jesus Christ;—united on the Mount of Olives with our agonizing Saviour, we shall

partake of the unction of his grace; and, supported by his own strength, we shall find ourselves afterwards on this same mount, to participate in the joys of his glorious ascension.

It now remains for us to seek for the motives which induced the Evangelists to transmit to us the name of the happy spot where our Saviour went to devote the last moments of his life to prayer: this place, they tell us, was called Gethsemane. *In villam quæ dicitur Gethsemani:* a Hebrew word, which signifies the valley of oil, or the olive-press. Therefore, of what consequence was it to the Christian world to know the name of that place, if the name itself had not hidden a mystery? In order to understand it, let us be careful to recall the history of that poor widow, mentioned in the fourth book of Kings. Being reduced to the utmost poverty, and totally unable to discharge the debts which her husband had left at his death, she was threatened by a cruel creditor with the ravishment and captivity of her children. *Ecce creditor venit, ut tollat filios meos ad serviendum sibi.*

The prophet Eliseus, moved at the fate of this distressed mother, goes to her, and miraculously multiplies the small quantity of oil she then possessed, in such a manner that she was able, with the produce of its sale, to satisfy all her creditors, and to reserve sufficient for her own and children's subsistence. *Vende oleum, et redde creditori tuo; tu autem, et filii tui, vivite de reliquo.* (iv. Reg. 4.) Still then, this narration is an image and a prophecy of the mystery of Gethsemane, and it gives us the explanation of it.

Indeed, the widow of Samaria represents the whole of mankind, that the spiritual death of Adam, its head and its father, had reduced to the most absolute poverty: it had nothing more with which to pay the contracted debt to the prince of darkness, and it beheld its own children subject to become the eternal and unhappy slaves of the devil. Then Jesus Christ, the true Eliseus, as this name *Eliseus* signifies God-Saviour, was touched with compassion for this unfortunate family; he came on earth, the seat of poor humanity, and he shed and multiplied the oil of his mercy, and of his divine blood. It is by the means of this precious liquid, that we unhappy mortals have made up the necessary sum to pay all our debts, to deliver us from the

slavery of the devil, to live the life of grace, and clothe ourselves with immortality. And, as Jesus Christ accomplished this act of his infinite love by the means of his passion, he chose the garden of Gethsemane, or the valley of oil, to commence it, so that the name itself of the spot should instruct us in the mystery which he was there operating.

It is for this reason, that David foretold that the Messiah, or the anointed of the Lord, should be covered with the mysterious oil of joy, on account of the truths of his precepts, of the mildness with which he was to endure his sufferings, of the justice which was to characterize his judgment, of his love for virtue, and of his hatred for vice. *Propter veritatem, et mansuetudinem, et justitiam. Dilexisti justitiam, et odisti iniquitatem: propterea unxit te Deus oleo lætitiæ.* (Ps. xliv.)

But Jesus had no need of this unction as Son of God; he receives it, therefore, as Son of man, as head and representative of mankind, so as to diffuse it over all the world. Therefore, it is at Gethsemane, observes St. Augustine, that Jesus Christ commenced to communicate to us this divine oil—it is there he verily became our Christ, or our anointed; there he abundantly diffused upon us the oil of his mercy, in order to regenerate us, and the oil of his virtue, so as to give us the strength successfully to combat, after his example, the devil. Is it not well known, that it is with the use of oil that combatants render their limbs more active, more supple, and more vigorous? Consequently, could Jesus, who desired to make this touching mystery of his love sensible to us, have chosen a more appropriate and precise image than that of the *valley of oil*, which represents in so perfect a manner the unction of his spiritual and divine oil. *In Montem Oliveti, in montem chrismatis intravit Jesus, ibi enim nos unxit oleo lætitiæ, quo ipse a Deo unctus erat. Ideo autem nos unxit, quia contra diabolum luctatores effecit.* (In Joan.)

Moreover, it was in that garden that the oil was extracted from the fruit of the olive-tree, "and it was also there," says the interpreter, "that Jesus Christ commenced to shed the blood which redeems us, which strengthens us by its unction, and which is to us the drink of immortality." *Sicut ex olivis exprimebatur oleum, ita ibi ex agonia expressus est sanguis Christi, quo quasi oleo reficimur, ungimur, pascimur.* (In Matth.)

But, as the oil, multiplied by Eliseus, was only poured into the vessels which were presented by the widow, so the sacred blood of Jesus Christ is only preserved by those souls whom the church offers up to him after having purified them; and these souls are those who hear the word of the church, who profess her faith, and partake of her sacraments. For St. Paul has said: *Despondi enim vos uni viro virginem castam exhibere, Christo.* (2 Cor. xi.)

Eliseus continually asked the widow for more vessels, to fill them with his miraculous oil, and it is thus that Jesus Christ, desirous of loading us with his graces, much more so than we ourselves wish to receive them, continually requires new souls from his church, in order to diffuse among them the oil of his mercy, and the church strives to find these precious vessels. It is for this object, that she sends her missionaries into idolatrous and heretic nations; and that, even in Catholic countries, she makes choice of us, in this holy time of Lent, to preach and exhort you in her name, faithful Christians, to open your hearts, so that the true Eliseus may fill you with the gifts of his love. *Dilata os tuum, et implebo illud.* The oil of the prophet only ceased to flow when the widow had no more vessels to offer him. *Respondit: Non habeo vas. Stetitque oleum.* It is the same with regard to the goodness of God: it never fails us; but the hearts of men refuse to profit by it. Ah! let us tremble for ourselves, because the Lord, as he threatens us, justly irritated for having so long waited in vain for our hearts, in order to fill them with his grace, will stop the course of this precious vein. Like the foolish virgins of the gospel, at the hour of death, we shall desire to obtain for ourselves the oil of his mercy; but we shall find no longer one to give us any—therefore, now that this precious vein of the mercy of God is opened to flow upon us, let us renounce our vices, purify our hearts from worldly thoughts by tears of penance, and replace them by grace, which so plentifully flows from the passion of Jesus Christ; so that, should we be at this present moment, with regard to God, vessels of his wrath, on the point of being broken by death, *vasa iræ apta in interitum*, (Rom. ix,.) we may become vessels of election, vessels of honor and glory, worthy of joy, of love, and of the everlasting society of the Lord. Amen.

Father Ventura's Second Conference

On the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DELIVERED IN THE BASILIC OF ST. PETER'S AT ROME, "THE PASSIONS."

"Debuit per omnia fratribus similari ut misericors fieret."

"Wherefore it behoveth him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high-priest."—HEB. xi. 17.

WHAT does, my brethren, the strange metamorphosis, the sudden change which, according to the evangelists, has been operated in the person of the Redeemer, at his entry in the Garden of Olives, signify? In his admirable discourse after the last supper, a few moments before his entry into the garden, he displayed a mild serenity, he expressed an ardent joy at the thought of dying for us, he exhorted his disciples to be patient, calm, and peaceful, he encouraged them to die with joy for him; and behold, on a sudden, without any new event happening, he shows himself to his disciples, overwhelmed with sorrow, consternation, and fear, trembling, and a prey to profound dejection: *Et assumpto Petro et duobus filiis Zebedæi, cœpit pavere, tædere, contristari et mœstus esse.* And not only does he allow his anguishes to be divined by the immovability of his gaze, the paleness of his countenance, the heavings of his bosom, the disorder of his appearance, the trembling of all his body; but he even discovers them to his apostles; he avows them when he said, in a weak voice, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death: stay here and watch with me:" *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem: Sustinete hic, et vigilate mecum.* (Matt. xxvi. 38.) Great God! thus, then, is the joy of heaven sorrowful upon earth! He who is joy to the angels, is in affliction among men; courage trembles, strength staggers, virtue is weak, the author

of life shudders at the approach of death, and he who promises to others his strength, his assistance, his consolation, is filled with terror, and declares that he himself is in want of assistance, consolation, and strength!

As for the rest, this condition of the Redeemer's sacred soul had been predicted ten centuries before, or rather it had been historically described in this passage of the Psalms: *Cor meum conturbatum est; formido mortis cecidit super me; timor et tremor venerunt super me, et contexerunt me tenebræ. My heart is troubled within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me.* (Ps. liv. 5.) Now, if God had predicted all these circumstances with such a precision, it is certain that he had wished and decreed them; they ought, therefore, to have their reason in the depths of the wisdom and love of God. This reason has been laid open to us by St. Paul, when he tells us, that since the Son of God became man in order to save man, it was proper that he should clothe himself in all the infirmities of human nature, and become man in every thing like unto his brethren, in order to accomplish the work of his mercy upon us: *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret.* It is under this point of view, which the luminous saying of the apostle discovers to us, that we are to consider the sentiments of fear, sorrow, and anguish, to which our Lord was a prey in the Garden of Olives; and, on beholding the freedom with which he excites them in his interior, the order in which he maintains them, and the truth which he reveals to us by them, far from finding in them a subject of scandal, let us consider them as motives of consolation and edification. For we shall be convinced that these sentiments are far from being unworthy of a Divine Redeemer, and that, on the contrary, this God-redeemer ought to have shown himself like unto us in all things, in order to prove his compassionate bounty: *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret.*

In going to the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus took the first step to Calvary. Alas! the hour of sacrifice is now approaching; the pyre is already raised, the fire is lit, and the Victim advances towards the altar upon which it is to be unmercifully sacrificed. But to arrive at it, what road will Jesus have to take! He will march from torment to torment, from suffering to suffering. Each of his footsteps will be marked by insults,

every moment of existence that still remains to him will be filled with bitterness, affliction, and sorrow. The road from Gethsemane to Calvary will only be a long continuation of outrages, insults, torments, and the most atrocious tortures; the preludes of the immolation of the Saviour will be as sharp and cruel as the immolation itself. Now, at the sight of so many evils, which display themselves in so terrible and so distinct a manner to the imagination of the Redeemer, repugnance and fear agitate his sensitive appetite, a sentiment of horror raises itself up in his sacred humanity, he is the prey of anguishes and fears of the most terrible nature: *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret.*

But it will be objected to us, it is probable, that Jesus Christ should have experienced, in the face of death, a sorrow so great, a repugnance so violent, a terror which many Christians have never felt under similar circumstances. Are not these sentiments, which might be pardoned in a vulgar man, of a most humiliating nature for a wise man? are they not especially unworthy of a divine Redeemer, who had offered himself to death for the glory of God and the salvation of the world? If Jesus Christ had not been able to prevent these passions from taking possession of him, or if he has not been able to drive them away, he is then no longer God. But if he is truly God, one cannot understand why, having the power of driving them away, he underwent them; and it is not less incomprehensible, that, having the power to be exempted from them, he submitted to these anguishes, which, by laying waste his heart, wounded his dignity and tarnished his glory. Such is the difficulty raised by rash men—I should, perhaps, rather say by senseless men—who dare to measure, by the narrow limits of the human mind, the height and depth of divine charity. But, if we consider, by the light of the gospel and tradition, the mystery of the sadness and horror which the Saviour felt in the Garden of Olives at the sight of death, we shall recognise that these features of perfect resemblance, which Jesus had with us, were useful and necessary, and that they were worthy of a divine Redeemer, resolved to show us all the possible marks of his mercy. *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret.* Guided by this light, we will penetrate into the depths of this august mystery.

In the first place, it is beyond doubt, according to St. Thomas, that the affections of the sensitive appetite with which Jesus appeared agitated, terrified, disordered, were and may be called, with an exact propriety of terms, the real passions of the soul. *Propriissime dicuntur passiones animæ affectiones appetitus sensitivi, quæ in Christo fuerunt.* (3 Prat. q. 15, a. 4.)

In the second place, it is equally certain that these passions and these sentiments did not act only upon the sensitive appetite, but also upon the divine soul of the Redeemer, since he himself says that his soul is sorrowful. Even more, he experienced them also in his will, as regards at least its inferior part, since he has himself further added: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt;" *Non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat.* This clearly signifies, as the interpreter observes, that there was in his human will a sorrow, a natural dread of death; and that he made a real act of the will in asking to be delivered from it. *Voluntate ergo sua tristatus est, et voluit a morte liberari.* (In Matt. xxvi.)

In the last place, it is impossible to doubt, adds St. Leo, that these passions were not in Jesus Christ real human passions. For the Saviour experienced our melancholy in becoming sorrowful, in the same manner as he experienced our confusion while enduring contempt, and our sufferings when nailed upon the cross. *In nostra est humilitate contemptus; in nostra est mœstitudine contristatus, in nostro est dolore crucifixus.* (Serm. 7, de Pass.) If it had been otherwise, his resemblance with us would not have had that exactitude and perfection which was requisite. *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari.*

Let us, however, guard against concluding from all this, that Jesus Christ, in really abandoning himself to the sadness of our nature, was afflicted in the same manner that we are. The perfection of his resemblance with us exacted, no doubt, an entire conformity with our nature, but it does not follow that he ought to participate in our sin nor in its consequences. In the same manner that the Son of God had really and truly clothed himself in the flesh of Adam, to the exclusion of sin, in the same manner likewise he had really and truly accepted our passions, without their disorder. Behold why these same passions, so humiliating for us in their principles, in their effects, and in their end, were, as regards these three circumstances, a glory

for Jesus Christ, in his very humiliation itself. *Christi passiones et posteriores glorias.* (Pet. i.)

The passions are humiliating for us in their principles, because they are ingenerated in us without our concurrence. Independent of our will, and often even against our will, it is impossible for us to prevent love or hatred, joy or sorrow, eagerness or repugnance, desire or fear, from awaking in our soul, when we are informed of something that is pleasing or painful, favorable or hurtful, to our moral or material well-being. Thus these sentiments, which we experience in ourselves, and which, in some manner, we cherish, are not designated as *actions*, but very justly as *passions*.

But these passions, with regard to their principle, were not involuntary on the part of Jesus Christ; they were the effect of his choice, and consequently in nowise humiliating to him. The evangelists, in fact, do not say that Jesus *feared*, that he *was afflicted*, that he *was sorrowful*. They use these expressions: Jesus *began* to grow sorrowful, and to be sad. *Cœpit pavere, tœdere et mœstus esse.* This clearly signifies, according to Cornelius Lapidus, that the Saviour was troubled freely and by his own will, and not in spite of himself, or by a necessary consequence of the foreknowledge of his sufferings. *Cœpit, id est ultro et sponte sua; voluntarie et libere, non coacte non invite.* (In Matt.) St. Ambrose has, on his side, said that while we endure our passions from the mournful necessity of our corrupt nature, the Christ was subjected to them only by the empire of his will. *Habemus nos hujusmodi affectus ex humanæ conditionis necessitate; Christi Domini infirmitas fuit ex voluntate.*

In effect, was not the sacred soul of the Saviour an adult from the moment of his conception? Did it not always see in the most clear and distinct manner, in the divine person of the WORD, to whom it was hypostatically united, all the torments, sufferings, and all the horrors of his passion and death? Nevertheless, all the sentiments which this frightful prospect and this mournful apprehension ought naturally to have excited in his sensitive appetite, languor and ennui, dread and fright, did not take possession of his soul before this day, because he had not before this day consented that they should take possession of his soul, at least with that degree of intensity which revealed

itself in his agony. In the same manner that once only, upon Thabor, he permitted the beatific joy which his soul tasted in this vision, to shine in all his body, so, likewise, once only did he permit his sensibility to be assailed by sorrow, dread, and fear, at the sight of the outrages and torments which awaited him. In order to resemble man, he was obliged really to participate in all the infirmities of humanity. *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari.* But, says St. Augustine, he continued master of these sentiments, and only allowed them to display themselves in himself as he wished, when he wished, and because he wished it; for he was God. He was troubled and afflicted like man, but with the same liberty and independence with which he clothed himself with human flesh, with which he gave his life for man. Dread, as well as death, approached him with fear and trembling, so to speak, and then only by his most positive order. *Hos motus ita cum voluit suscepit animo humano, sicut cum voluit factus est homo. Qua potestate mortuus est, eadem est potestate turbatus.*

But some will say, "If the soul of Jesus enjoyed the clear vision of God, the ordinary effect of which is to exclude all kind of pains, and to cause to flow in us inexhaustible delights, how is it that the Saviour experienced so intense a sorrow, so lively a grief, that they were sufficient of themselves to cause death?" *Tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem.* There is nothing in this, says St. Augustine, to surprise us. This weakness of Jesus, by the side of his divine virtue, this indescribable and mournful melancholy which he experiened by the side of infinite joy, were the effect of a miracle of his boundless power: *Ejus infirmitas fuit ex potestate.* (Contr. Faust.) It was with an equal liberty, and an equal power, that, in order to be able to suffer and die physically, he did not permit his beatitude to shine from his body, and that, in order, like us, to experience moral sorrows and affliction, he prevented his divine joy from springing up in his heart. These passions were therefore, in their principles, as glorious for him as they are humiliating for us. They were, beyond a doubt, human passions, since Jesus Christ was truly and really man; nevertheless, remarks St. Peter-Damien, they were above human nature. It is from weakness that our passions take birth; it is from power that those of Jesus spring. They

often rule over our hearts; they ever obey Jesus. They prejudice our reason; they are submissive to that of Jesus. They spring into existence in our interior, independently of our will; they enter into Jesus when only he commands them. Nothing in him is the result of necessity; every thing is the effect of his power and liberty: hunger and thirst were to him only voluntary evils, so likewise were his sadness and fear: *Supra naturam fuerunt, quia non præcedebant in eo voluntatem. Nihil enim coactum in Christo, sed omnia voluntaria fuerunt. Volens enim esurivit, timuit, tristatus est.* (De Fide, lib. iii.) Oh! how every thing is august, admirable, and magnificent in Jesus Christ! What an order, what a harmony, what a perfection reigned in this divine hypostasis. The ineffable prerogatives of the Divinity did not prevent the weakness of human nature, and the miseries of man did not degrade the majesty and grandeur of God. O amiable Jesus, in thy very humiliations thou art worthy of our worship, our admiration, and our love! *Gloriamur in Christo Jesu.* (Philip. iii.)

The passions are humiliating for us, not only in their principles, but also in their effects. Miserable beings that we are! It is not sufficient that our passions should outstrip our reason, they also obfuscate it; they are not content with braving our will, they succeed also in wakening it; they not only trouble the heart, but often tyrannize over it; they draw it into evil, and leave it only just sufficient liberty to render it culpable. How many criminal designs are we not inspired with by the desire of riches, of pleasures, of dignities, and by fear of poverty, of sorrows, and of dishonor! How many crimes do not our passions suggest to us! How many base and infamous actions do they not cause us to commit! What numerous vices does not human respect, for example, beget; how many virtues does it not destroy, especially in the hearts of women and children? Sometimes, no doubt, our passions are natural and legitimate, as, for example, the love of life and the fear of death; but often, also, this love of life, this fear of death, forces the soul out of herself; and, under the empire of this passion, how many apostles have become deserters or perjurers! how many martyrs have become apostates! how many virgins have forgotten virtue! how many wives have neglected their duties! how many Christians have

fallen into infidelity! It is not thus with the passions of the Saviour; docile and submissive in their principles, they were still pure, more innocent, and holy in their effects.

Remark, I beseech you, the narrative which the evangelists give us of the sorrows and fear of Jesus in the Garden of Olives. All the terms they employ, observes the interpreter, express sorrow with a sort of emphasis: *Singula verba habent emphasim doloris.* (Matt. xxvi.) The very words themselves of the Saviour —*My soul is sorrowful even unto death*—signify clearly, The fear of torments and ignominies which await me fills my soul with sadness; my dread is so lively, that if, from my soul, which is intimately penetrated with it, and almost broken, it were to invade my body, it would be sufficiently powerful to cause my death. I experience a melancholy, a depression of spirits, similar to those which fill a man who strives against death. I feel that my senses abandon me, that my life and my mind desert me, and it seems to me that I die solely from the violence of my sorrow. These words of the Saviour, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death," have, according to St. Hilary, this signification: Such is the terror I experience in the bottom of my heart, that, if the presence of my divine virtue did not come to the succor of my human weakness, I could not survive it, I should most certainly die: *Tristis est anima mea*, etc., id est: *Tanta est animæ meæ tristitia, ut nisi virtus divina perseveraret, me perduceret usque ad mortem.* (In Matt. xxvi.) And, notwithstanding, oh! grandeur of the soul of Jesus! every thing is perfectly co-ordained in the Author of order. Excessive suffering in the sensitive and inferior part, and perfect and entire liberty in the superior and reasonable part. His sadness is profound, and his resolution is firm. This grief, so sharp and so penetrating, troubles not his reason, it diminishes not his courage, it shackles not his power, it weakens not his generous resolution of encountering death for us. We shall soon hear him, in the sublime prayer which he addressed to God his Father, express his horror at the approach of death, and his desire to undergo it; his fear at its approach, and his joy in accepting it: *Transeat a me calix iste. Verumtamen non mea voluntas, sed tua fiat.* We shall see him recoil before the image of death, and throw himself in the path of those who come to inflict it upon him: *Surgite, eamus hinc.*

Oh! happy passions of my Saviour, reason gives them scope and reason assigns limits to them, so that they can only attain holy, sublime, and divine ends. O pure passions, which, far from humiliating the Mediator of men, only honor him by displaying his divinity, at the same time that they reveal his perfect resemblance with man! *Debuit per omnia*, etc.

Finally, the passions are humiliating for us, not only in their principles and their effects, but also in their object and their end. The object of our fears and our hopes, our sorrows and our joys, our repugnances and our desires, is often but frivolous. We torment ourselves for evils purely chimerical, or for advantages that have no reality, and which are oftentimes fatal. We dread poverty, which causes us a salutary humiliation; tribulation, which detaches us from the things of this world; abasement, which cures our pride; infirmities, which prevent us from sinning; and death, which insures us an immortal life: *Illic trepidaverunt ubi non erat timor.* On the contrary, we love, we seek after riches, which corrupt our hearts; pleasure, which enervates us; glory, which intoxicates us; prosperity, which ruins us. Still oftener our passions pursue only a guilty object. Many, in effect, dread nothing but virtue, love nothing but vice, and propose to themselves no other end, in their affections, than to steal others' goods, to blacken their neighbor's honor, and to destroy their life. But what object had human passions in Jesus Christ? St. Paul tells us that Jesus had never but a sublime end in view—an end pure and worthy of a God—one of mercy and love.

St. Thomas, with all the holy fathers, affirms that the passions of our Saviour had three principal objects: firstly, to make satisfaction to God for the sins of the world; secondly, to procure for us a remedy for our passions; and lastly, to prove to us the truth of his human nature. I shall have ample occasion to develop the two first motives in the course of these conferences. I intend to confine myself, to-day, solely to the first, and I shall endeavor to make you understand of what importance this motive is for us, and how worthy it is of the bounty of our Divine Master. *Ut misericors fieret.*

First of all, remark this expression of St. Paul: It behoved Jesus Christ to be made in all things like men, with whom he

wished to have Adam as father. This means, that not only by sympathy, by affection for us, he has wished to have a perfect resemblance with us, and to take our passions, as the son of a great king would do, who, drawn by his love for his slave, would adopt his language and his manners, in order to render himself in all things like to his bondsman; but the word *debuit*, *it behoved*, implies a kind of necessity. It signifies that the Saviour, in the immensity of his love, having conceived, with all the plenitude of his liberty, the design of clothing himself with our mortality in order to save men, it became necessary that he should render himself in every thing like to them; for it is only in this manner that he could give them a sensible proof of his mercy: *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret.*

"The better to understand this, let us bear in mind," says St. Augustine, "that the sin of Adam was of such a nature that man alone, who had committed it, could expiate it; but that, at the same time, a God alone could worthily atone to a God for this same sin: *Peccatum Adæ tantum erat ut illud non deberet solvere nisi homo; sed non posset nisi Deus.* The truth of the redemption depends, then, on the truth of the incarnation. If the Word of God has not truly taken the nature of man, then this unfortunate nature has neither prayed, nor suffered, nor given satisfaction in him; it is a stranger to the redeeming action of the Divine Mediator: it has no part in his sacrifice; it has not been redeemed.

"If the eternal Word has only clothed himself with human flesh in appearance, his redemption likewise, as well as his nature, is only in illusion. However, cries out St. Leo, we have really been redeemed, for it is from the midst of us that the Victim that was immolated upon Calvary has been chosen. It belongs to us, it is really ours, this immaculate flesh, engendered by a virgin mother, and at last nailed to the cross by the impiety of the Jews. Yes, Jesus Christ, in his passion, pleaded our cause; because he united in himself, and represented under a real form, the nature of all men, with the exception of sin: *Nostrum est quod peperit materna virginitas; nostrum est quod Hebraica crucifixit impietas. Per eum agebatur omnium causa, in quo erat omnium natura sine culpa.*" (Serm. viii. et xiii.)

The Word of God was then at the same time true man. This is a consoling truth, and so much the more important, as it is the foundation of Christianity. Thus the Saviour wished to prove it by an incontestible evidence, by showing himself, at the approach of death, accessible to sorrow, ennui, and fear. Such is, at least, the common opinion of the fathers. Listen to a few of them:—

"When the hour of his death approached, Jesus could, if such had been his wish, says St. Augustine, have banished far from him sadness: but he has, on the contrary, wished to pass through this trial, in order to show to us that he carried in himself the weak nature of man, whose property it is to be afflicted under the weight of tribulation and under the scythe of death. *Moriturus potuit utique sine tristitia esse; sed portabat infirmitatem eorum qui instante tribulatione et morte contristantur.*" (In Ps. xxx.)

St. Chrysostome is even still more explicit. "In order to condemn beforehand the impiety of capricious heretics, who maintained that Jesus Christ had only an apparent and fantastical body, our Saviour submitted to partake of all the evils of our condition: he submitted to hunger, thirst, and fatigue; he submitted at the hour of death to all our repugnances and anguishes. In a word, he submitted to suffer absolutely like a man, to convince us that he had truly clothed himself in human flesh. *Ut ne phantasma putaretur, permittit carnem suam ferre naturales defectus; esurire, sitire, laborare, anxiari. Humana sustinet ut veram carnem se habuisse demonstret.*" (Homil. 48 in Matt.)

We must also remark, that our Saviour did not say, *I am sorrowful*, but *my soul is sorrowful;* an admirable expression, and one filled with wisdom, according to St. Ambrose. In fact, Jesus, by using this manner of speaking, clearly discovers to us, on one hand, that he had in him, besides his soul, the *I*, or the person of the WORD, with which his soul and his body were substantially united; and this is why he says, *my soul;* that, consequently, sadness was in his human nature, and not in his divine nature. On the other hand, he shows us that in becoming man he has not only taken the body, but also the soul of man; in a word, that he has clothed himself in a body similar to ours. *Tristis*

est, non ipse, non divina substantia, sed anima: suscepit enim animam meam sicut et corpus meum. (Lib. 10 in Luc.)

See, in fine, how St. Hilary expresses himself. "Jesus Christ showed himself sorrowful, afraid, and desolate; he shed tears, not to receive from man any consolation, but to reveal to man a great mystery. In undergoing these weaknesses, these affections purely human, he wished to convince man of his human nature." *Christus non sibi flevit, sed nobis: ut assumpti hominis veritatem ipse quoque affectus humanæ consuetudinis protestaretur.* (De Trin. 10.)

"Let us conclude from all this," adds St. Augustine, "that, by subjecting himself to these proofs of our infirmities, by clothing himself with our flesh, Jesus Christ has not been compelled by the necessity of nature, but has been incited by an excess of mercy. *Hos humanæ infirmitatis affectus, sicut ipsam carnem ac mortem, non conditionis necessitate, sed miserationis voluntate suscepit.*" (In Ps. lxxxvii.)

"Ah! how should we be convinced," continues St. Ambrose, "that Jesus Christ is our Redeemer, if he had rejected our sentiments as unworthy of him? *Quomodo dolebat meo vulnere, si meum non gerebat affectum?* (In Ps. lxi.) Since, then, he has submitted to fear and to sadness, which belong to the feeble nature of man, the less motives he had to be afraid and afflicted for himself, the greater is our certitude that he was in fear and affliction for us. *Ergo pro me doluit, qui pro se nihil habuit quod doleret.* (Id. in Luc.) If we did not know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, we would not be able to discover whether it is the apprehension of the torments with which we are menaced, that caused him to undergo this mortal affliction which he shows with so much confidence to his disciples; but, as we know that he is the Son of God, and is truly God, and, from this title, happy in himself, we may boldly conclude, in beholding him sad and sorrowful, that he is afflicted with regard to us alone, and that his tears flow only for us. *Tædio meæ infirmitatis afficitur, suscepit tristitiam meam.*" (In Luc.)

But the motive which led the Saviour to shudder at the sight of death, is of such importance in the interest of the Saviour's dignity, and in those of our faith and our hope, that it requires of us a much greater development.

Let us observe, on this subject, with St. Augustine, that the fear of death is not the effect of a vain opinion, or of a fatal prejudice, but that it is a sentiment natural to man, and which has God himself for its author. *Mortem horret non opinio, sed natura.* (Serm. clxxii. de Verb. Ap.) If death were of itself an easy or indifferent thing, the glory of the martyrs would be chimerical, since they would not have made to God any other sacrifice than that of a vain terror. *Si nulla esset mortis, aut parva, molestia, non esset tam magna martyrum gloria.* (Tract. 123, in Joan.) But it is not so; it is certain, on the contrary, that the most formidable enemy that the martyrs had to encounter in confessing the faith, was the love of life. This love always existed in the bottom of their hearts, even in the prospective of eternal happiness, of which they were about to enter into possession, in giving their life for Jesus Christ. It was by triumphing over this love, for the love of Jesus Christ, that so many Christians have acquired the glory of martyrdom; it is also for not having known how, or for not having wished to vanquish it, that so many others have become unfortunate apostates.

If the desire of death is a sentiment common to all just and perfect souls, all likewise experience instinctively a secret dread at its approach. Whilst they cry out, with St. Paul,—Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! *Infelix ego homo! Qui me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus* (Rom. vii.),—a secret voice of nature seems to protest at the same time against this generous desire, and to repeat, with the same apostle,—I do not, however, wish to be freed from my body, but I desire that that which is corruptible should be absorbed by the life, or by the celestial glory, and that immortality should clothe me as a new garment, without it being necessary for me to quit the old one. *Nolumus expoliari, sed supervestiri, ut absorbeatur quod mortale est a vita.* This is equivalent to saying, according to St. Chrysostome's remark upon these words of St. Paul, that the saints desire, beyond a doubt, a better life, which unites them to Jesus Christ; but that they love not death for itself. If they invoke it, it is through the desire they feel of being delivered from corruption and concupiscence, which are concealed in their bodies, and are the work of sin: but they do

not hate the body, which is the work of God. They wish to lay aside every thing foreign to them; but not to be ravished of what belongs to them. *Non carnem volumus deponere, sed corruptionem; non corpus, sed mortem. Nam corpus est opus Dei; corruptio et mors sunt a peccato invectæ. Ait igitur Paulus: id quod alienum est exuere volo, non quod proprium.* (Serm. xxxiii. de Resur.) If, therefore, it is a duty for us to accept of death with resignation, as a chastisement that God has justly inflicted upon man in expiation of sin,—if it is a sublime act of charity to desire it in order soon to be united with Jesus Christ,—to feel a horror at it is nevertheless a natural and legitimate sentiment, and even the effect of a noble instinct, which traces back in our memory that we had primitively been destined to immortality; for, although sin has deprived us of this glorious privilege, we nevertheless aspire to it, like a disinherited son, who loses his right to his father's property without losing the desire of obtaining it. So that, if we except the circumstances in which man is driven to suicide, either by the disorder of his intellectual faculties, or by an inconceivable and cold despair, he cannot entirely withdraw from his heart, says St. Thomas, the desire of living, and death is, consequently, for him an object of natural horror. *Naturaliter vitam perpetuo remanere vellemus; ad amissio vitæ corporalis naturaliter est horribilis humanæ naturæ.* (3 p. 9, 46 a. C.) This being granted, Jesus felt a mortal shivering in order to convince us only, says St. Chrysostome, by this sentiment, so natural to man, that he also had really clothed himself in our mortality, and that he was, as well as we, a child of that Adam whose sins he prepared himself to expiate. *Mortem recusat, id quod est humanum ostendens.* (In Matt. xxvi.)

The martyrs could in all security display their courage, despise their tyrants, show a sincere joy and a perfect calm in the midst of the most unheard-of tortures; they could look upon the most cruel preparations for death with an intrepid eye: no one could doubt that they were really men. But if, at the approaches of a frightful death, preceded by the torments and opprobrium of a passion not less painful, Jesus Christ had given no signs of sorrow, of sadness, or of fear, heretics would then have abused this circumstance; they would have pretended that his human

nature did not resemble ours; that it was only aerial or apparent, spiritual or celestial, and on that account impossible. For if, in spite of all the proofs the Saviour has given of the reality of his flesh, there have been found heretics who have dared to deny it,—to what extreme would they not have pushed their temerity, if Jesus had shown himself impassible or indifferent in the face of death?

This is the reflection of St. Chrysostome, which he thus expresses: "If the malignity of the devil has dared to deny the truth of the human nature in Jesus Christ, by the mouth of Marcion, Valentine, Manichæus, and a crowd of other innovators; if he has thus sought to destroy to its foundation the mystery of the Redemption, although the sufferings undergone by Jesus Christ,—his death and his burial,—clearly demonstrate that he is man, what more terrible ravages would not this fatal frenzy have been able to effect in this world, if the Saviour had not deigned to demonstrate, by such multiplied and palpable proofs, the reality of his humanity! *Si malignum os diaboli, per Marcionem, per Valentinum, Manichæum, et alios plures, doctrinæ œconomiam, quantum in ipso fuit, potuit subvertere, tametsi et passiones et mors et sepulchrum reclament; si nihil horum contigisset, nonne multo amplius diabolus hæc dogmata disseminaret!*" (In Matt. xxvi.)

We can easily understand, after this, why Jesus, leaving the other apostles at the entrance of Gethsemane, entered the garden with only Peter, James, and John, and why he was sorrowful, afraid, and melancholy, before them alone. Let us recall to mind, that the three disciples whom Jesus chose to be the witnesses of his anguish in the garden of Gethsemane, are the same he had chosen to be the witnesses of his glory upon Thabor. Jesus, observes Theophilactus, chose as witnesses of his anguishes the same apostles who had beheld his transfiguration, in order that they might bear witness, before the whole world, that they had seen with their own eyes this Divine Redeemer, resplendent with light and covered with blood, encompassed by the homage of Moses and Elias, and in the attitude of a man who implores the pity of his equals; and to prove likewise that they had heard proclaimed by the mouth of God himself, that his well-beloved Son was at the same time truly man. *Illos tres*

tantum assumit, qui gloriæ Ejus in monte Thabor spectatores extiterant; ut qui gloriosa viderant, viderent etiam tristia et addiscerent quod verus erat homo in hoc quod tristiatur. (In Matt.)

One is astonished how minutely the evangelists—disciples of Jesus—have committed to writing all these particularities, so humiliating at first sight, and capable of eclipsing the glory of their divine Master, and of lessening the idea which their love and their zeal have sought to give us. One asks with surprise, why have they represented Jesus Christ with dispositions less perfect in appearance than those which many Christians have shown when they have felt the approaches of death. But all astonishment must cease after what we have already said. For, by these descriptions we can recognise the ingenuity of the evangelists, as well as the truth and the divinity of the gospel. In effect, ordinary historians, who take up the pen only to exalt their heroes, even at the expense of truth, would never, most certainly, have depicted the Redeemer of the world overwhelmed by the weight of his sadness and his affliction, as if he were the weakest of mortals. Far from speaking of his sadness and fear, they would only have boasted of his intrepidity and his courage, they would only have represented him under an aspect more in conformity, according to the judgment of men, with his high dignity. But such has not been the system of the evangelists: with a spirit superior to all human minds, they have said of Jesus that which no devoted disciple would have dared to say of his master. It is, therefore, clear, that these divine historians relied upon the success of the narrative they gave us of the glory of their Master, not from the artifices of rhetoric or poetry, but from the power of faith and of truth; that they wrote under the dictation of God, and not under the inspirations of interest or human calculations; that the Holy Ghost enlightened their minds and guided their pens, and, in a word, that the author of the gospel is the same God who is the subject and hero of the gospel.

To you, O holy evangelists, are our thanks due, for having described the history of the Man-God, and for having related with a candour and simplicity so dissimilar to the ways of this world the history of his sorrows. The revelation of the Saviour's

weakness was as necessary for us as that of his glories: all serve to consolidate our faith. Praised be you, holy evangelists, who did not allow yourselves to be influenced by the idea that your narrative might be a subject of scandal for the pride of unbelievers, and who have been influenced only by the desire of instructing the humble and edifying the faithful. Praised be you, for having spoken of the sadness of the Saviour, as well as of his cross, and for not having blushed, either at his weakness or his sufferings. And why is it that you have not blushed? Under these apparent ignominies of the Saviour, you have, on the contrary, discovered the sublime mystery, destined to be eternally concealed from pride,—the profound secret of the wisdom and love of God, who has wished to save the world by the opprobrium of his cross. No, this great lesson shall not be lost for us. We also will enter into your intentions and your sentiments, with the dispositions of a faith humble like yours; we also, from your example, place in the humiliation of Jesus Christ our Lord all our hope and all our glory; and we loudly declare ourselves convinced, that a God-Redeemer ought to show himself in every thing weak and infirm like us, in order that we might know and feel his mercy. *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari, ut misericors fieret.*

We have seen, in the beginning of this conference, with what precision and what clearness David had predicted, in the Psalms, the mystery of the sadness of the Saviour in the garden. Let us now add, that, being the faithful historian of Jesus Christ, as well as a prophet, David has not only predicted this mystery, but has also, in his own person, represented it. The Scriptures relate, that, being pursued by Absalon, his ungrateful and degenerate son, the holy king, in retreating from Jerusalem, marched on foot, his face distorted by grief, and being accompanied only by the servants of his household, and a small number of those of his subjects who remained faithful to him. All followed him, shedding abundant tears. *Egressus est rex, et universa domus ejus pedibus suis, omnesque flebant voce magna.* (Reg. 2, xv.)

It is also said of David, that, on leaving Jerusalem, he directed his steps to the banks of the Cedron. After crossing the torrent, the king ascended the Mount of Olives, with bare feet and un-

covered head, and that he stopped there a short time to adore God by prayer. *Transgrediebatur torrentem Cedron; ascendebat clivum olivarum, flens, et nudis pedibus, et operto capite, adoraturus Dominum.*

Now, says Lapidus, following the opinion of the ancient fathers, how is it possible not to see in this picture the anticipated portrait of Jesus Christ, who, pursued also by new Absalons—the Jews, his ungrateful and rebellious children—abandons Jerusalem with an air of profound sorrow; he is also accompanied by his small family, that is to say, by his apostles alone, who participate in his affliction; he passes the Cedron, and goes also to the Mount of Olives, to recollect himself, there to pray in the attitude of the profoundest humility and the most poignant sorrow. *David cum suis transgressus torrentem Cedron, fuit typus Christi, eumdem torrentem transgredientis.* (In Matt. xxvi.)

Grotius, a Protestant interpreter, and who on this account cannot be suspected of mysticism, adds to the above, that Achitophael, at first the friend and counsellor of David, whom he afterwards betrayed, that he might become the guide and counsellor of Absalon, was the figure of Judas. This perfidious disciple, in fact, betrayed Jesus, whose friend he had been, and guided the Jews himself, that they might seize upon the person of the Saviour, as he had advised them. Moreover, continues Grotius, Absalon, the unworthy son of David, and rebel to his king, was the figure of the Jewish people, whom the Lord, in the Holy Scriptures, had called his son, and who had revolted against Jesus Christ, their true Master. *David typus Christi, sicut perfidus Achitophael Judæ, ita Absalomus, ingratus et rebellis filius populi Judaici imaginem gessit.* (In. Joan.)

In the same manner that David, after the persecution of Absalon, remounted and consolidated his throne, so also Jesus Christ, after the persecution of the Jews, consolidated his kingdom upon an eternal basis. *Et regni ejus non erit finis.*

And, in order that nothing might be wanting to the resemblance between the figure and the original, let us add that both Achitophael, the author and accomplice of the revolt of Ab-

salon, and Judas, who had encouraged the treachery of the Jews, ended their lives in despair, and perished in the same manner, by strangling themselves with their own hands. In a word, an avenging sword put an end to the crimes of Absalon by death, as did the sword of the Romans destroy the Jewish people, and disperse throughout the world the miserable survivors.

But if David showed himself inconsolable at the death of Absalon, it was not so much, it seems to me, because he had lost his well-beloved son, as that, enlightened by a prophetic light, he discovered, in the mournful end of Absalon, the terrible figure of the end, still more mournful, of the Jewish people, who were the heirs of Absalon's punishment, as well as of his crime. On the other hand, the sorrow which David showed on this occasion was also a figure of the mortal sadness which Jesus Christ felt in Gethsemane for the loss of his people of predilection, and for that of those Christians who follow their example.

Thus then, wo be to you, sensual Absalons, ungrateful rebels, for whom the holy sadness of piety, the severe practices of the gospel, and the spirit of submission and obedience to the wishes of your heavenly father and sovereign Lord are things unknown! Wo be to you, who seek only to gain in the world an easy and brilliant position, and to spend your days in the midst of the amusements and enjoyments of life. For a day will come when your foolish joy and your senseless merriment will be changed into a subject of eternal tears and sorrows.

But, on the contrary, the companions who remained faithful to David, and who had followed him in his flight, and in his exile, partook afterwards with him in the advantages of his throne; and they represent thus the apostles and the true Christians who, after having been associated to the sadness and sufferings of Jesus Christ, take part in his glory and his felicity.

Oh, happy those faithful souls who, animated by a sincere zeal for their salvation, and a fervent love for Jesus Christ, seek to associate themselves with his bitterness! Yes, Christian souls, you will be happy, if you place your delights in solitude, if you retire far from the world, in silence and prayer, in the midst of

the tears and the mortifications of penance; for your sadness, your paleness, your retirement, your humility, your modesty, your reserve, your delicacy of conscience, your life of sacrifice and prayer,—all these things, at which the world jests, because it knows not their value, will be one day changed, in your regard, into a perfect joy, into an immortal joy; which worldlings may envy, but which they can never take away from you. *Tristitia vestra convertetur in gaudium; et gaudium vestrum nemo tollet a vobis.* (Joan. xx.)

The place itself in which Jesus Christ was troubled and sad, is a presage as joyful for you as it is fatal for sinners. In effect, the valley of Gethsemane, crossed by the waters of the Cedron, is precisely the celebrated valley of Josaphat, as venerable Bede affirms: *Inter mœnia urbis et montem Olivetem est vallis Josaphat, interluiturque a torrente Cedron.* It is, then, in this place that, inebriated with joy, and encompassed with light, you will one day see, O chosen souls, these modern Absalons, the worldlings, far different from what they now are! They now give themselves up to sensuality, pride, and avarice; they show themselves intractable, haughty, cruel, shameless. They are now vile calumniators of your actions, unjust censurers of your piety; and also make themselves the fatal agents of your misfortunes. Then, you will see them, humiliated, degraded, crouching at your feet, with the sign of reprobation stamped on their foreheads, the stigma of ignominy on their countenances, and despair in their hearts, await from your mouth the sentence which will decide their miserable lot for all eternity. *Stabunt justi in magna constantia adversus eos qui se angustiaverunt* (Sap. v.) *Judicantes duodecim tribus Israel.* (Matt. xix.)

Oh! how dreadful will it not then be to find oneself on the left hand, among reprobates, in company of demons! How delightful will it not be to stand on the right, among the elect of Jesus Christ! Oh! since there is still time, let us strive to assure ourselves, even from this day, of the place we would then wish to occupy. Let us, for this reason, press close to Jesus Christ: let us love humiliation, suffering, and mortification for his sake; and we shall, most assuredly, reign in happiness with him. *Si....compatimur ut et conglorificemur.* We will thus

learn from our own experience that the humiliations and miseries of human nature, of which Jesus wished to make a trial, were the necessary condition by which we were to partake of his mercy in this life, and of his glory in the next. *Debuit per omnia fratribus similari ut misericors fieret.* Amen.

THE END.

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